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**MAULANA  
ABUL KALAM  
AZAD**

*A Memorial Volume*









*Drawn by Miss Amina Ahmed on 14 June 1945, the day MAULANA AZAD was released from Bankura Jail.*

# MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD



*A Memorial Volume*

Edited by HUMAYUN KABIR



ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE  
BOMBAY . CALCUTTA . NEW DELHI . MADRAS

*Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi*

1959

PRINTED BY PYARELAL SAH AT THE TIMES OF INDIA  
PRESS, BOMBAY, INDIA, AND PUBLISHED BY P. S.  
JAYASINGHE, ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, BOMBAY 1.

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**S. RADHAKRISHNAN:** Vice-President of India; one of the most famous scholars and writers of the modern world.

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**LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE:** Secretary of State for India at the time of the Cabinet Mission which led to the independence of India.

**LOUIS MASSIGNON:** A famous French Orientalist well-known for his work on Islamic Mysticism; was invited by the Government of India to the International Seminar on Gandhian Outlook and Techniques.

**J. B. KRIPALANI:** Former President of the Indian National Congress and a well-known writer and scholar.

**SYED MAHMUD:** A lifelong friend of Maulana Azad; former Member of Congress Working Committee, Minister in Bihar and later in the Government of India; now Member of Indian Parliament.

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- M. C. CHAGLA:** Ex-Chief Justice of Bombay High Court and now Indian Ambassador in the U.S.A.
- A. R. WADIA:** Professor of Philosophy and Member of the Indian Parliament.
- TARA CHAND:** A well-known historian and educationist; was Educational Adviser to the Government of India and served as Indian Ambassador in Iran; now Member of Indian Parliament.

## *Preface*

MAULANA Azad attained eminence as a brilliant writer and theologian in his early youth. The spirit of free enquiry and search for truth which characterized him from those days soon led him into the political movement as he realized that man cannot attain a true and full development except in an atmosphere of freedom. From his early 'twenties, he was a fighter for Indian freedom and his contribution to the cause of Indian nationalism has been widely acknowledged. The Indian nation did him the honour of electing him the President of the Indian National Congress when he was only 35. Later, during the most critical period of the struggle for freedom, he guided the destinies of the Congress for six momentous years and conducted the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Wavell and the British Cabinet Mission which resulted in the attainment of Indian Independence in 1947.

Apart from his contribution to the Indian national struggle, Maulana Azad was also an outspoken champion of rationalism and progressiveness in all spheres of Indian life. He sought to approach religious, moral, social, economic and political questions from a detached and dispassionate point of view and worked for securing justice and fairplay for all sections of the Indian people.

Maulana Azad was essentially a scholar who had been dragged into politics by the force of circumstances. Nothing reveals the scholar so clearly in him as the way in which he tried to shun publicity. Political leaders—in India or elsewhere—generally derive their strength from their contacts with the masses but Maulana Azad was essentially a recluse who preferred his study to the arena of politics. His shyness and retiring nature had, however, the result of endearing him still more to the people as was proved by the stupendous demonstration of public grief and admiration which followed his death.



In view of Maulana Azad's known dislike of publicity, it was with some hesitation that some of his friends decided to arrange for a public celebration of his seventieth birthday on 11 November, 1958. For once Maulana Azad was persuaded to agree and on 18 November, 1957, a committee was set up to plan and organize the celebrations. The Committee consisted of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Zakir Husain, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. B. C. Roy, Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Shri U. N. Dhebar and Shri Humayun Kabir. It was decided that the most befitting manner of celebrating Maulana Azad's seventieth birthday would be to present him with a Birthday Volume at a public meeting organized for the occasion.

Fate, however, willed otherwise and Maulana Azad died on 22 February, 1958. The Committee then decided that the project should not be given up but instead of a Birthday Volume, a Memorial Volume should be published on the first anniversary of his death. The present volume is being released in accordance with this decision of the Committee.

The Committee is grateful to all those who have contributed to this volume. It has been decided that the royalties accruing from the book will be donated to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for awarding two prizes which have already been instituted by the Council, viz. one for an essay on some aspect of Hinduism by a Muslim citizen of India or Pakistan, and a second for an essay on some aspect of Islam by a non-Muslim citizen of these two countries. In view of Maulana Azad's love for the young, it has been decided that the competition will be confined to persons who are 30 or below on the 22nd of February of the year in which the prizes are awarded.

HUMAYUN KABIR

*New Delhi,  
12 January, 1959*

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## NOTE

The Editor has endeavoured to maintain a uniformity of spelling for proper nouns in this volume, except where an individual contributor has indicated a strong preference for a particular form.

**MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD**

*Born at Mecca on 11 November, 1888*

*Died at New Delhi on 22 February, 1958*



## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

### *The Passing of a Great Man*

MR. SPEAKER, SIR, it has fallen to my lot often to refer in this House to the death of a colleague or some great man. I have to perform that duty, a sad duty, again today in regard to one who was with us a few days ago and who passed away rather suddenly, producing a sense of deep sorrow and grief not only to his colleagues in Parliament, but to innumerable people all over the country.

Now, it has become, if I may say so, almost a commonplace, when a prominent person passes away, to say that he is irreplaceable, that his passing away has created a void which cannot be filled. To some extent that is often true; yet, I believe that it is literally and absolutely true in regard to the passing away of Maulana Azad. I do not mean to say that no great men will be born in India; certainly not. We have had great men and we will have great men; but I do submit that that peculiar and special type of greatness that Maulana Azad represented is not likely to be reproduced in India or anywhere else.

I need not refer to his many qualities which we all know — his deep learning, his scholarship and his great oratory. He was a great writer and he was great in many ways. But there are other scholars; there are other writers; there are other orators; but there was this combination in him of the greatness of the past with the greatness of the present. He represented and he always reminded me of what I have read in history about the great men of several hundred years ago, say, if I think of European history, the great men of the Renaissance, or in a later period, of the Encyclopædists who preceded

the French Revolution, men of intellect, men of action. He reminds me also of what might be called the great qualities of olden days — the graciousness of them. There were many bad qualities, of course, in the old days, but there was a certain graciousness, a certain courtesy, a certain tolerance, a certain patience which is sadly to seek in the world today. There is little of graciousness in the world today, even though we may become more and more advanced in scientific and technical ways. Even though we may seek to reach the moon, we do it with a lack of tolerance, with a lack of some things which have made life worthwhile since life began. So, it was this strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and toleration and an understanding of the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was.

Everyone knows that even in his early 'teens he was filled with the passion for freeing India and he turned towards ways even of violent revolution. And then he realized, of course, soon after, that that was not the way which would gain results.

He was a peculiar and a very special representative in a high degree of that great composite culture which has gradually grown in India. I do not mean to say that everybody has to be like Maulana Azad to represent that composite culture. There are many representatives of it in various parts of India; but, he, in his own venue, here in Delhi or in Bengal or Calcutta, where he spent the greater part of his life, represented this synthesis of various cultures which have come one after another to India, rivers that had flowed in and lost themselves in the ocean of Indian life, India's humanity, affecting them, changing them and being changed themselves by them.

So, he came to represent more specially the culture of India as affected by the culture of the nations of Western Asia, the Iranian culture, the Persian culture, the Arabic culture which affected India for thousands of years —

especially Iran — as everyone knows. In that sense, I said that I can hardly conceive of any other person coming who can replace him because there was already a change in the age which produced him and that age is past. A few of us are just relics, who have some faint idea of that age that is past.

I do not know if the generation that is growing up will even have any emotional realization of that age. We are functioning in a different way; we think in a different way; and a certain gap in mental appreciation and understanding separates us, separates the generations.

It is right that we change; I am not complaining. Change is essential lest we become rooted to some past habit which, even if it was good at some time, became bad later. But, I cannot help expressing a certain feeling of regret that with the bad, the good of the past days is also swept away, and that good was something that was eminently represented by Maulana Azad.

There is one matter I should like to mention here, a curious error to the expression of which I have myself been guilty about Maulana Azad's life and education. Even this morning, the newspapers contained a Resolution of Government about Maulana Azad. The error is this, that it is stated — as I have stated sometimes — that he went and studied at Al Azhar University. He did not do so. It is an extraordinary persistence of error of wide circulation. And, as I said, I myself thought so. Otherwise, I would have taken care to correct it in the Government Resolution which has appeared today. The fact is that he never studied at Al Azhar University. He went, of course, to Cairo; he visited it as a visitor, to see it; but he never studied there. He studied elsewhere. He studied in fact, chiefly in Calcutta, in the Arabic schools as well as other schools. But he spent a number of years in Arabia. He was born there and he visited Egypt as he visited other countries of Western Asia.



So, we mourn today the passing of a great man, a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect with an amazing capacity to pierce through a problem to its core. I have used the word 'luminous'. I think perhaps that is the best word I can use about his mind — a luminous mind. When we miss and when we part with such a companion, friend, colleague, comrade, leader, teacher — call him what you will — there is inevitably a tremendous void created in our life and activities.

It is possible that the initial reaction may not be a full realization of that void. The initial reaction is one of shock and sorrow. Gradually, as days pass, the void appears deeper and wider and it becomes more and more difficult to fill that place which was filled by a person who has passed away. But that is the way of the world and we have to face it. We have to face it not negatively but positively by devoting and dedicating ourselves to what he stood for and trying to carry on the good work which he and others who have left us — captains and generals of our peaceful forces who have worked for Independence and progress and the advancement of India, who have come and who have gone leaving their message behind. And so, I hope that though he may go, he will live and his message will live and illumine us as it did in the past.

*Speech delivered by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, in the Indian Parliament on 24 February, 1958.*

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

## *The Search and the Attainment*

MAULANA SAHIB was an outstanding figure of great courage, fearlessness, integrity and passionate love for freedom. He has been a unique figure in our political life for nearly two generations. Even before he joined the Congress in 1920, he was a revolutionary. His political wisdom, patriotic fervour and sacrificial service were recognized early and he was made the President of the Indian National Congress in 1923, a position which he held for a number of years on different crucial occasions. His services to the country as a sagacious statesman, an ardent patriot, and a great intellectual are inestimable. He suffered for his convictions, but he never shrank from expressing his views. Among the great qualities of leadership he had, was this that he never shrank from expressing his views for fear of losing his popularity. A leader has to be firm. No man can be a leader if he does not risk unpopularity for his views. He who tries to please all ends by pleasing none.

Maulana Azad noticed the defects which made for subjection and struggled to the best of his ability to remove them. National dissensions have been a frequent cause of our repeated humiliation and subjection. He stood against them; he wanted to bring about the consolidation of our country. A devout Moslem, whose work on the Quran has become a classic, he always stood for national unity and communal harmony. He made no difference between Hindu and Moslem, Sikh and Christian. He felt that all those who were in this country belonged to one country. National spirit was the driving force of his life. He was an apostle of national unity and communal

harmony, the lessons which we have to remember even now, since there are forces which are still at work in this country to divide us from one another. Indian unity cannot be taken for granted. It has to be nourished with great care in these days of linguistic and regional dissensions. These differences should be used to enrich the unity of India.

While his profound humanism is well-known, he had a clear vision of what was right and what was wrong in public affairs. While he allowed compassion to sway his behaviour in personal relations, he never deviated from principles of justice so far as public affairs were concerned. He may forgive a man if he insults him personally, but he who does a national disservice has to be dealt with adequately. Compassion in personal relations and justice in public affairs has been his principle. If we neglect probity in administration, the stability of the Government and the stability of our social structure will be undermined. He was much too fond of the right to prefer the wrong or the expedient. All along, whenever questions of administrative integrity arose, he fought for preserving high standards in public administration. That is another lesson which we have to remember.

When once freedom was won, he again felt that we must use that freedom for promoting social welfare, cleanse this country of sickness, squalor, illiteracy, etc., and cleanse our minds of superstition, of obscurantism, of fanaticism. He stood for, what one may call the emancipated mind, the mind which is free from narrow prejudices of race or language, province or dialect, religion or caste. We had in Maulana Sahib the civilized mind.

Whenever I went to talk with him, he was full of quotations from Arabic and Persian. I do not know, but I am told that his command over these languages was unsurpassed and his speeches, which he gave in Urdu, were firm in their structure, dignified and polished in their diction, and cogent and pointed in their purpose.

Let us remember that he worked for the ideals of national unity, probity in administration and economic progress. These are the things which we have set before ourselves. The only way in which we can honour his memory is for us to adopt these ideals and question ourselves every day whether in our acts we are promoting national unity, we are promoting integrity in administration, we are promoting economic and material progress. That is the way in which we can imbibe the lessons of his life.

Books have been his constant and unfailing companions. His conversation was full of quotations from the Arabic and Persian classics. He wrote an Introduction to *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, which began with a Persian couplet which compares the Universe to an old manuscript of which the first and the last pages are lost. It is no longer possible to say how the book began nor do we know how it is likely to end.

*avyaktādīnī bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata  
avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra ka parivedanā.*

To find out the meaning of life and existence is the purpose of the philosophical quest. We may not succeed in finding it out, but the pursuit of this quest is its own reward. He ends the introduction with another Persian couplet which says that those who follow this path never tire because it is both the way and the destination. His life is an illustration of this. It was both the search and the attainment.

There is no doubt that we will not see the like of him again — a great man, a man of stately presence, indomitable courage and fearless behaviour, that is what the Maulana was.

*Among the Immortals*

I

‘ A REAL man and few are such men ’. This talk was scheduled to be read at the reception in honour of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, when Indian leaders decided to honour him on his seventieth birthday in appreciation of his contributions and in recognition of the services he rendered to the Indian nation and humanity at large, whether in the political or cultural field or in the field of national liberation.

But while the sponsors of the reception were fixing a date for this occasion, Fate in its turn had fixed its own date with the Maulana. Fate proved itself much quicker, and the Maulana had to respond to the call of his Creator in the same calm manner which had always characterized his life. And who could know if it would have been feasible for the speakers and the writers to express all the admiration and the regard they held for his person and his works had the Maulana still been alive? This is all the more doubtful considering the Maulana’s innate dislike for praise. Nothing could have been more disturbing and painful to him than to see himself the object of praise, even if that praise was justified and well-deserved. In this respect, he proved himself to be above the level of greatness. He was a man, who in his awareness of the great qualities God had endowed him with, never cared for words of praise or admiration. Notwithstanding all this, Fate was determined to do justice to the Maulana and satisfy his wishes. It rendered him justice by providing

speakers and writers with an opportunity to speak and write about him freely and without any sense of embarrassment. Undeterred by considerations of his dislike for praise, they have now become free to reflect and express whatever praise they held in store for him; they can now depict and portray him in the manner they choose. The Maulana has set them free to speak and write as they wish, for the Maulana is now gone into history. Fate has also satisfied his wishes by allowing him to hear nothing but the truth, in which he solemnly believed and which he frankly professed. Whosoever chooses to speak or write in memory of the Maulana can now echo the truth. His approach to the Maulana's life will now have to be that of a discerning and analytical historian who is mainly concerned with establishing the truth and communicating it to future generations. To bring to light the truth about the Maulana and his personality is in my humble estimation the greatest duty which his followers and friends can do. In whatever he did or said, the Maulana always showed himself to be a seeker after truth.

His contacts with people, whether they agreed or disagreed with him, his approach to life be it in renunciation or acceptance, were all measured and assessed by canons of truth and goodness. He only embraced whatever was true and good and held these principles in his deep conviction. Whatever was contrary or not in consonance with these criteria, was unacceptable to him irrespective of how great the temptation or how strong the urges and motives. The Maulana could not conceive of life devoid of truth and goodness. People could only be considered as people, if and when they were inspired and motivated by such considerations. In the circumstances, we can say in all confidence that the Maulana's soul has every reason now to be calm and at peace. Whatever is said in his commemoration will only bear the emblem of truth and reflect goodness. This is all the more so, having regard to the fact that his being itself

was the embodiment of truth and goodness. His life, it goes without saying, was consecrated to truth and good deeds. Maulana should now be all the more content with Fate which rendered the day fixed to honour him into a memorial occasion, guiding people on the path of truth and moving them to acts of goodness.

It was equally the will of Fate that my experiences about Maulana after his death should be greater than my contacts with him during his life. We met only for a few moments in Delhi in April 1955 while President Nasser and I were on our way to attend the Bandung Conference. The Egyptian Ambassador in Delhi and India's friend, Sayed Ismail Kamel, undertook to present me to him. I was presented as a Minister in the Revolutionary Government of Egypt, and as a religious man who had graduated from Al Azhar University. I still recall the remarks he made at the time I was being presented to him. He said that to depend and fall on religion for guidance and inspiration is the most desirable way for serving humanity and religion itself. Prior to the meeting, I had prepared myself well for the occasion of meeting a great personality like that of the Maulana. I was determined not to allow anything to distract me or interfere with my ambition to acquaint myself with him at close range and under close observation, particularly after all I had heard about his scholarly qualifications and nobility of character which were known near and far. The problem which posed itself before me then was how to penetrate into the depth of so rich and deep a personality and acquaint myself with its greatness and genius. The maximum I could capture of him in so short a meeting amounted to the thrill and animation which overtakes an artist at the sight of a piece of fine art, or the exaltation felt by a scientist at the discovery of an astonishing scientific fact. I was overpowered by the personality of the Maulana, greatly impressed by the purity and lustre of his soul, which enabled him in a few

moments to bypass the limits and barriers of time. In a very short time I felt as though we had been friends for years.

This short meeting could not satisfy my curiosity. On the contrary, I felt an even stronger urge to acquaint myself more with the various and manifold sides of his life. In this pursuit of mine, I was like a thirsty traveller who struck water in the heart of a desert. I decided to maintain mental and spiritual communion with him, and determined to embark on an extensive study of his works and those written about him. It is not surprising, considering his rich and vast reservoir of knowledge—in the wordly as well as the transcendental—that I took this decision.

Through its scientific and industrial progress, the Western world succeeded in making us discard our past glories and forget our great men. It almost made us part with or abandon everything that was good in our past and present history. Yet the present awakening of the Orient is destined to engender in us a new consciousness to appreciate and value the treasures of our past and present, and realize that these treasures are not only worthier of our attention than those borrowed and imitated from Western culture but are equally or perhaps even more useful to us.

I was determined to learn more about the Maulana when we last parted, but his crowded life on the one hand and my pre-occupations on the other, curtailed my efforts and I was unable to follow up his scientific and educational activities or make an appropriate study of his cultural work.

Fate so willed it that the Maulana's life should come to a peaceful end. Through his death, the opportunity has come for students of history to see the Maulana in his true perspective and try in their own turn to uncover and make known the various sides of his greatness. In his life, the Maulana was a dynamic force. He is best



compared to a meteor, which, travelling in space at a terrific speed, is only visible through its lustre, but what lies behind this lustre and light, nobody is able to grasp or discern.

## II

I have already pointed out that my mental communion with the Maulana after his death was deeper than my contacts and acquaintance with him during his life.

Ever since he passed away, he has been alive in my memory. In his life, he filled a great vacuum, but when he died and the rich fountain of his pen dried up, we felt the weight of the calamity, and realized the great blessing and bounty of which we were deprived. We miss his presence in every calamity or misfortune that befalls us as we have no one to look to for guidance and advice. It is customary for people to take for granted the great blessings they enjoy but once deprived of them, they realize their value and importance. Then they begin to sing their praises and grieve at the idea of losing them.

Like many of India's past and present great men, Maulana Azad was a blessing God gave to humanity. He preached truth and advocated love, and counselled and urged acts of goodness. He had a human mission inspired by lofty and sublime motives. This mission he carried in his heart, nursed by his conscience and strengthened by his genius. Through this mission, his life became richer, his feelings more refined. His pure soul reflected only good principles and human values, which he had imbibed and which he in his turn passed on to other people to guide them to the right path of life. Just as water acquires the shape and colour of its container, similarly ideas and principles acquire the character and nature of the personality irrespective of whether such a personality is honest and upright or wicked and evil-minded. A virtuous and upright man normally harnesses

his education and knowledge and virtues to the service of his people. His knowledge becomes a fountain accessible to all. The same education or knowledge imparted to an evil or wicked soul is transformed into affliction, leading people astray and pushing them to wrong and evil deeds. A seed sown in a good soil grows and flourishes into a hanging tree and bears fruit. The same seed sown in a different soil is eaten up as rust eats iron. Our Prophet, may His name be blessed, put it most correctly when He said: 'The Mission of guidance and knowledge God has entrusted to me is comparable to rain which, falling on a good soil grows and bears fruit, falling on a barren land stores it for people's needs, but falling on unfavourable soil, neither gives growth nor accumulates water for drinking or irrigation.'

### III

The Maulana was a personality in which only good could abide, and in which only Love and peace could find shelter. Such a personality, once truth gains access to it, shines and illuminates the path for others. Once truth finds way to it, it grows and prospers. The Holy Quran has covered this point in the following *Sura*:

*The good earth shall with the grace of God give growth, but the barren and naked shall only produce evil.*

It was the good fortune of the Maulana that the Holy City of Mecca was his birthplace, India his homeland, and Islam his religion. It was in the Holy City of Mecca that his eyes saw light for the first time. His parents settled there, seeking blessings from the sacred and holy surroundings of the Land of Prophecy. It is not unlikely that a divine and holy touch captured him and settled in his heart for it is only in proper and good surroundings that the blessings of God and his bounties dwell.

The Maulana spent his life in India, where the soul is free from the shackles and fetters of materialism, where abstention from the pleasures and luxuries of life is the general rule — India, the land where great talents find room to grow, where gifts of mind have an opportunity to develop and where critical and discerning genius gains roots.

Islam, the professed faith of the Maulana, is a creed which elevates human beings above considerations of race and colour. A born Moslem does not acquire by virtue of his birth and faith any position of privilege or preference over anyone else. Nor is he considered immune from moral and ethical discrepancies by virtue of his Islamic faith. According to Islamic law, a man gains a position of prominence or sinks to the level of degradation in keeping with his own deeds and actions, and the degree of good and evil in him.

The principles of Islam found in the person of Maulana a good and favourable climate. Very soon these principles dominated him. They became the mind with which he thought and the heart with which he felt and the conscience with which he reacted. He found no difficulty in observing the laws and traditions of Islam, nor did it prove costly for him to follow the path of Islam and live in accordance with its dictates. In him, Islam became a manifestation of a central and sound character, an expression of all the good abiding therein. Were Maulana not a man of religion, his own character alone would have guaranteed him a life unbesmirched by moral and ethical weaknesses.

The greatness of Maulana Azad gains the highest expression in his belief in God and his correct and true understanding of the principles of Islam. He was committed for trial before a British tribunal on the charge of instigating revolt. Evidence against him was collected from two speeches he delivered in Calcutta where he urged the Indians in general and Moslems in particular

to embark upon a campaign of civil disobedience. The trial took place in 1922, when the Maulana had still the spark of youth in him. At this particular stage of one's life, a man is normally anxious to preserve whatever little youth is left in him and is haunted by the horrors of old age. One's normal reaction under the circumstances would be to indulge in the desires and pleasures of life and concern oneself with one's own affairs. Had the Maulana adopted such an attitude when he was young in age, it would have been interpreted in terms of the urges of young blood and the rebellious spirit of youth. Had he taken a similar stand in his old age, it would have been interpreted to be the direct result of his despair and disgust with old age. But Fate so willed it that the Maulana should demonstrate this firm attitude at this particular stage in his life, when one is at the cross-roads between old and young age. In so doing, Fate sought to place on human record a symbol of human elevation, a proof of deep conviction in truth and an example of fighting tyranny and despotism.

Maulana Azad had to face the British Empire with all its might and influence, which evoked in people general fear and forced them into servility and made them lose every hope of an early redemption or deliverance. Alone, Maulana Azad stood to face this great Empire. He was unarmed except for his strong faith and iron will. Alone he stood facing the jury from whom no mercy or sympathy could be expected. All he could expect from them was what a docile lamb could expect from hungry wolves. No sooner had this battle started in Court than it became evident that it was destined to be one of the most violent battles known to history. In this battle, the Maulana recorded a decisive victory for humanity, a victory which decided the future of humanity for generations to come. We now leave the floor to the Maulana to tell us in his own impressive words the story of this encounter which only giants are capable of performing and which serve

to stimulate and strengthen people's hearts, and above all put the forces of evil to shame and disgrace.

The Maulana faced the Court with courage and firmness. It looked as though he had an appointment with someone he liked. The silence which reigned over the Court was soon interrupted by the Maulana, when he said :

‘ It was my intention at first not to make a statement before this Court as it is not the place where we can look for justice nor is it a place to which we can refer our complaints. This Court is very much like a road-turning which one has no option but to cross to reach one's house. We are here much against our will. Otherwise, we are sent to jail forthwith.’

In so saying, the Maulana was trying to shorten his way to prison and death. He preferred to face both than to live in a country where tyrants had their way. Resuming his statement, the Maulana said :

‘ When I contemplate the significance of the position in which I am privileged to find myself, I find myself repeating the praise of God and my gratitude to Him. God alone is aware of the pleasure that I am experiencing by standing in this witness box. I find myself an object of envy of great kings and sultans : for they, in spite of their luxurious and comfortable palaces, are unable to enjoy the tranquillity, peace and satisfaction which I now enjoy. I stand for truth which, if only people realized and comprehended, would prompt them to wish and yearn to be in my present position. It was my intention at first not to make a statement before the Court, but having been committed for trial, and realizing that Government's evidence against me is based on two speeches I made at the Calcutta mosque, and aware as I am that the said two speeches do not

cover and include all the statements I repeated in my various speeches and letters and articles which, if produced to the Court, could have better served the purposes of the Government, I finally realize the inability of the Prosecution to produce sufficient evidence which under the circumstances would suffice to penalize me notwithstanding the keenness of the Government to send me to jail. I have therefore changed my mind and remind myself that the causes which stood to prevent me from making a statement now justify that I should make one. I seek to prove and establish what the Prosecution has failed to do.'

Has one ever come across an accused person trying to prove his own guilt, and helping the Court to pronounce a verdict against him? Such an attitude can only be expected from great men in times of great tests and ordeals. The Maulana later resumed his statement trying to prove his guilt, when he said :

' If these declarations in the opinion of the Court constitute a crime, then I admit that they have always occupied my attention. I uttered and repeated them before thousands of people. I even find myself driven to repeat them again before this very Court, and shall continue to repeat them so long as I live. Otherwise, I am acting against myself and stand condemned before God and the people.'

The Maulana knew and well realized that by tolerating wrong deeds one is acting against his conscience, his God and humanity. He realized that he was morally responsible before his religion and conscience to try by all the means at his disposal to remove this wrong, and if physical force failed him then to try to achieve his purpose by exposing the crimes of the oppressors. With the roar of a lion, he turned to address the Court, saying :

‘ I am a Moslem, and as such it is incumbent upon me to denounce oppression, underline its evils and expose it to the world. Ever since its emergence, Islam has laid emphasis on the fact that right is not might, nor can it be based on might. According to Islam, right is right, and it is not given to any people to enslave others and exploit them. In Islam, all human beings are equal. They enjoy equal rights and opportunities irrespective of colour, creed or race, which are no criteria for any preferential or privileged position. In Islam, one’s own work, deeds and conduct are the only criteria for one’s advancement and privileged status. It is only through their good deeds and virtues that people should attain positions of privilege or pride themselves on their good ancestry. Islam laid down and defined the rights of man centuries before the French Revolution. To demand from a Moslem not to call a tyrant by his own name, is tantamount to asking him to renounce and abandon his human values. If you consider it inappropriate to persuade someone to change his religion, it is equally inappropriate to prevent a Moslem from calling a tyrant a tyrant or a despot by his own true name.’

Such was the character of Maulana Azad. He was never a professional politician, who would wear a new garment to suit the exigencies and requirements of different occasions. He was a man of religion and as such he would not bargain or barter with his religion. He would never renounce his conviction. Religion to him was one and indivisible whole. One should stand for truth and right, or stand on the side of evil. In defending what is true and right, a Moslem is prepared to forbear all hardships and tests. Resuming his statement, the Maulana said :

‘Islam from beginning to end is nothing but a call for the demonstration of courage, gallantry and sacrifice. It reflects one’s readiness to sacrifice one’s own life in the service of right and truth. The world, irrespective of its long history, had not witnessed or experienced greater sacrifices than those which Moslems have made at various stages of their history. The British Government should realize that a Moslem, who is required by his religion to face death and welcome it in the most trying circumstances, would not refuse to fight for the cause of truth. The colonial Penal Code will not shake him nor will it deflect him from his position or prevent him from observing his religious duties. I stand to defend what is right and true. I am not pained or grieved to note the intention of the Government to punish me or evade my trial with the intent and purpose of sending me straight to jail. Such action, in my estimation, is inevitable but what pains me to the depths is the attempt to reverse the order of things. Instead of allowing a Moslem to express himself freely and say what he feels to be right and correct, a Moslem is asked to keep his mouth shut, asked not to call a despot a despot, a tyrant a tyrant, for no other reason, except that such statements are punishable under the law.’

Concluding his description of this memorable scene, he then turned to address those Indians who were brought before the Court to give evidence against him. He tried to find an excuse for them and prayed to God for their forgiveness. He said :

‘My friends, rest assured I bear you no grudge, nor do I entertain any animosity towards you, nor do I accuse you of lies and forgery. All you have said against me in your evidence is true and correct, but remember that in helping the British Government to be arbitrary



and tyrannical and fight Islam and humanity, you have acted in defiance of God's orders. I know and realize that your conscience is tormenting you for what you have done, but I know equally well that you have been driven to do so under the pressure of need and want and the maintenance requirements of your families and dependents. I know that you are incapable of demonstrating any fortitude or forbearance in defence of truth and right. Instead of censuring you or being angry with you, I pardon you and pray to the Almighty for your forgiveness.'

The Maulana knew human weaknesses. He did not expect all people to rise to the levels of those high values to which he himself has risen. This explains his inclination to forgive and find an excuse for others for the mistakes they had committed. Yet he never broke away from the misguided elements amongst his own people. Rather, he maintained contact with them in the hope of providing his own remedy to their weaknesses, a remedy which draws strength from his power of forgiveness, wisdom and tolerance. Before the curtain was dropped to announce the end of this tragedy performed by imperialists under the guise of justice, he turned to address the jury in the following terms:

'As to you, members of the jury, how and in what terms can I address you except to repeat before you what former patriots and believers have said under similar circumstances? You may pronounce whatever verdict you deem fit. Your judgment can only be operative in this mortal life. Your Honour, I feel I have spoken enough and that the time has come for us to bid each other farewell. Whatever has transpired between us will go down in history as a moral and a lesson for others. You, my judges from your Benches, and I from this box have co-operated together in



preparing this record. Let us now bring it to its conclusion. Let me hasten to come to you and you in your turn may accelerate the steps destined to bring about my end. But let me tell you that it would not be very long before a new trial is opened and the Divine Law is applied. Time makes such a trial imperative. Its verdict will be correct and inescapable.'

Such was Maulana Azad, whose deep convictions in Islam have helped him to withstand all hardships, ordeals and hard tests. He never wavered or deflected from his path. Islam preaches absolute monotheism which helps human beings to look only to God. People professing the Islamic faith will not bend their heads. They will raise their voices in defence of truth. Maulana Azad, acting upon the dictates of his religion and conscience, championed and defended the cause of truth.

This serves to explain the intimate and close contacts which he maintained with the great leader, Mahatma Gandhi. In spite of differences in faith and creed, both believed in truth and preached it. Maulana Azad was a staunch Moslem, so was Gandhi a staunch Hindu. The communal strife in India could have brought about an estrangement between them as it did disturb relations between so many Moslems and Hindus. Imperialists had for long centuries fomented dissension and lent fuel to the communal fire every time the Indian national leaders tried to quench it. But their deep understanding of the meaning and influence of religion bound Maulana and Gandhiji in a common aim and united Hindus and Moslems against imperialists. Thanks to their dynamic and driving force, India succeeded in defeating Britain and forced her to evacuate her troops, thus restoring to Indians their lost freedom and dignity.

To Maulana Azad, religion was not an instrument which would make people live in self-contentment and isolation with no interest in anything but themselves.

Religion, according to him, was not an article or a piece of merchandise to be bartered to the service of lies and hypocrisy or to be used for ensuring material gains or securing positions of influence. Religion is nothing like that. It is ethics and fine character. It motivates people to goodness and stimulates in them the human touch. In his estimation, people could find in religion the same solicitude which a traveller finds in the shade of a tree on a hot summer noon.

Islam, which the Maulana had chosen for his faith, is a religion which showers on humanity great blessings and bounties, and binds its various and different people in one common ancestry. The following *Sura* from the Holy Quran serves to define the attitude of Islam on this very point :

*Oh, ye people, We have created you from male and female and made you into different peoples and tribes so that you might come to know each other. The nearest amongst you to the heart of God is only the most virtuous.*

Maulana Azad's understanding of the mission of science and learning is in no way less than his understanding of the mission of religion. Education, in his view, was not the means to amass a fortune and hoard it as misers do or squander it like spendthrifts. Education performs the same function as religion. It enlightens the mind, cultivates the character, and engenders the human touch which serves to bring people nearer together in the service of truth and so unravels the mysteries of the universe and harnesses the forces of nature to the benefit of mankind.

With this understanding of learning and education, Maulana Azad sought to educate himself and exhausted himself in its attainment. He was content that he was receiving his education with the conscience of a warrior

fighting for the cause of God, and with faith and conviction of those fighting for the sake of truth. That is why Maulana Azad saw in education a very effective weapon to propagate his message of peace. He knew that cultural contacts have the same binding force which parental ties have on people. He realized very well that people meeting on cultural levels come nearer to each other and that no sooner do their ideas meet than they become friends. People, in his view, can come together and cultivate friendship through cultural ties. This would render possible a comprehensive human unity and motivate people to fraternize and love each other. In his Inaugural Address delivered at the first conference of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations he made the following observations :

‘ Cultural co-operation was imperative from an international point of view. Should we succeed to set up and build large blocs on the basis of goodwill and friendship, the causes of doubt and estrangement amongst peoples will be removed and then we will be in a position to promote international understanding and strengthen the cause of world peace.’

Experience has proved that cultural ties play a larger role in uniting people than political ties. This is so because political bonds are based on personal benefit while cultural ties aim at understanding. Subsequently, the teachings of Islam and the significance of knowledge and education were the values which inspired his interpretation of love and which stimulated in him the desire to do good. Never in his life did he entertain hatred towards anyone or harm anybody, notwithstanding how notorious or wicked a person was. Nor did he hate those who tried to enslave the Indian people and violate the sanctity of their homeland. Like Gandhiji, he waged war against Britain, but not against the British. It was not a war in

which Indians had to take up arms against the British. The only weapon to be used in this war was the moral one. It was to take the form of a boycott of British goods. Indians were not to wear anything that was of British make. They were not supposed to meet Britons or have any social contacts with them. Nobody could have predicted at the time how effective this movement would be but it proved more effective than ballistic weapons. It shook imperialism to its very roots and forced the imperialists to pull out eventually from the country. Such was Azad who, like Gandhi, believed that good could only breed good, and that evil would always spell evil. It was only through adherence to the principles of right and truth that India eventually triumphed. It is on the basis of these canons of truth and righteousness that India succeeded in shaping her life and building a State on the principles of love and peace.

The loss felt by India through the death of one of her leaders like Maulana Azad is felt equally by humanity at large, for humanity itself lost in him one of the pillars of truth. It is felt all the more when it is realized how much humanity stands in need of defenders and propagators of truth. India's only consolation and that of humanity for this great loss lies in the fact that the Maulana has left behind him a rich reservoir of his intellectual achievements which should prove instrumental in disseminating and spreading the cause of freedom and goodness. Although his life history provides a fine example for the present and future generations to follow, it goes without saying that many people in India and elsewhere, in Moslem and non-Moslem countries, stand equally to benefit from his personality. If the sun of the Maulana has come to set, it shall remain ever radiating and shining across the ages. If this brilliant chapter in his life history is now closed, it would still occupy its appropriate place in the annals of immortality. Indeed, the author of these brilliant pages will occupy his rightful place amongst

the immortals. Every time the sub-continent of India recalls the memories of her own philosophers and leaders, people of the calibre of Tagore and Gandhi, Iqbal and Azad, it does so in the hope and expectation that the present and living amongst her leaders will strive to fill the vacuum left by the late Gandhi, Tagore, Iqbal and Azad. India, after all, is the birthplace and cradle of champions and supporters of humanity.

May the blessings of God fall on this immortal soul, and render his anniversary a source of inspiration and guidance! May God compensate India and the world at large for this great loss!

## LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE

### *A Tribute*

It was a great shock to me to hear of the death of my old friend Maulana Azad. As recently as December of last year he had entertained my wife and myself to lunch at his house in New Delhi. He seemed then to be in good health and was looking forward to his seventieth birthday. As Minister of Education, he was able to give me facts and figures of great interest to me regarding the progress of literacy throughout India, of the educational advance of women and of the growing numbers of schools for children in the villages and rural areas.

In 1946 when I led the Cabinet Mission to India to arrange for the transference of power, I saw him nearly every day for a large part of the period of my visit. He was then the President of Congress and as a distinguished and learned Moslem he had a unique and sometimes a difficult role to play. But I formed a high opinion of his character and intellectual gifts and he always bore himself with great dignity and discretion.

Not only in India but also in other parts of the Commonwealth where he was known, he will be mourned as a public servant of high repute who devoted his great talents to securing the freedom of his country and to building up among her people high traditions of learning and integrity.

## *My Meetings with Maulana Azad*

JUST AS I was thinking about the lines I intended to contribute to his '*Ajab Name* for the anniversary of the seventieth birthday of our friend, there came to me, in a whisper from the Eastern winds, from the 'Santal' wind — just as a low sobbing from over the Indian sea — his *na'y*, as Arabs say, his mourning-tidings.

And now, sadly and faithfully there comes to my mind from afar, and mingled with a deep regret (for two months ago I was in Lahore and I could have crossed the boundary to shake hands with him once more), the remembrance of our first and last meetings.

The first was in Baghdad, in 1907-1908, just fifty years ago. We met at the Mirjan Mosque as pupils of our dear master, Hajj Ali Alussy who lies there now. He died as Great Cadi, on the night of January 6-7, 1922. This Hanafi *faqih* was the son of Nu'man Alussy, author of the *Jala'l 'Aynayn*, the defender of Ibn Taymiya, and the grandson of Mahmud, the celebrated author of the *Tafsir Ruh al-ma'ani*. Hajj 'Ali was living under the same roof with his cousin Abulhasan Maninud Shukr Alussy (who died on 8 May 1924; I had the *Fathiha* said at his tomb on 11 January last at the Junayd Cemetery). As *dayf al-Alussyaiyni*, I was living then near them in the Hayder Khan Quarter, now broken open by new roads. (Only the 'Aquli Mosque and their former house, now an official school, remain).

Both of us, the Maulana and I, received from Hajj 'Ali's lips a teaching already familiar to the Maulana, a teaching deeply influenced by Siddiq Khan (of Bhopal); this Indian master, who died in 1890, had taught Hajj



'Ali in his youth, in India. Siddiq Hasan Khan was the *mujaddid* of the Ahl al-Hadith. And Hajj 'Ali accordingly took part in the Salafi movement for the reform of the Moslem community as a whole. Hajj 'Ali introduced me, when I came back to Cairo (he had been Cadi in Ba'al-bekk) to the Syrian and Egyptian Salafis, Jamal Qasimi and Rashid Rida; and twenty years later, I had the pleasure of introducing my younger colleague and friend, Henri Laoust, to Rashid Rida, with whom he began his remarkable studies on Ibn Taymiya and Wahabism.

Personally engaged in the social study of guilds and of mysticism, the Alussys made me understand the hold of the Hanbali 'aqida on the Baghdadian martyr, Husein Mansur Hallaj, pointing to his Hanbali defenders, Ibn 'Aqil and Ansari of Herat (and Ibn Qudama). And I learnt from Hajj 'Ali how to value the widespread influence of such a Moslem Indian author as Siddiq Khan, who had 103 of his *risalas* written in Urdu, 74 in Arabic, and 45 in Persian.

Our last but one meeting was in New Delhi, where the Maulana had invited me to the Gandhian Seminar. I cannot forget that day of 8 January, 1953, when he took me for lunch at home with him alone. The main part of our two lives was already over. We were meeting again, equally anxious to secure for Islam a chance as a third force in the world, and for Islamic minorities, their rights and hopes of equality; he himself in India, as I did, not quite unofficially but also in the National Education, in Northern Africa. Both of us felt in Salafiya a firm basis for testing methods in every proposed social *Islah*. I told him about the legacy of our Baghdadian year to me, that year 1907-1908 when Husein Mansur Hallaj, in such a strange psychic experience, gave its frame to all my scientific and social researches and hopes, and not only for this world: to me, a Christian standing for the rights of Moslems. I told him how I had been interested in the Hallajian influence in Bengal, but I felt

that these *Mansuris* were for him akin with the 'Iblisiyan ideal of Hallaj' developed by Iqbal in his *Javid Name* and so passionately explained to me by the 'name-maker of Pakistan' when visiting me in Paris, two years before his death. We talked also of the late Sh. Sulayman Nadwi (to whom Iqbal had written about my Hallajian researches), and of his 'retirement' before his death. Maulana seemed really sympathetic with my account of the Hallajian theory of truth, *Haq*, having led me to share socially in the Gandhian satyagraha. And he seemed very close to me when I mentioned the visit on 6 January, 1953, made together with Husayn Haykal (of Cairo) and Matin Daftary (of Tehran) to Qutbeddin Bakhtiyar's tomb in Mehrauli: in remembrance of Gandhi's last fasting (for the sake of justice for Moslems) and Ziyarat to Mehrauli, four days before his death.

Our last exchange of letters was on my bond of prayer with the Moslems in Mehrauli, during my repeated attempts to have the situation of the Moslems improved in my own motherland.

Then took place our very last meeting, in Paris on 14 July, 1955, the French National Festival. I was just coming back from the Paris Mosque, where we had sadly commemorated five French Algerian workmen fallen (most unlawfully) in their Festival procession two years ago. He understood me fully, nor did he attempt to smile at my stubbornness against contrary winds. It was also his last task, to hold on, and to right the helm forward: *Allah wahdahu*.

*Paris, 31 March, 1958*

## *The Voice of Reason*

It is too early to make a comprehensive and critical study of Maulana Azad's personality, his many accomplishments and his contribution to the political, intellectual and cultural life of the country. Personalities who play a significant part in the contemporary political and intellectual life of a nation need time before a proper assessment of their work can be made. Yet, so much is known of the Maulana Sahib that time may make little difference in any critical estimate.

My acquaintance with him dates as far back as 1913. It was through the columns of his weekly Urdu journal, *Al-Hilal*. Those were the great days of Indian journalism — the days of Tilak, Bipin Pal and Aurobindo and a host of other writers. Maulana's journalistic contribution ranked among the best. I was then a professor of history and politics in a college in Bihar. It was a wonder to me how a man so young in years and who knew no modern European language could yet discuss the internal and international contemporary political scene with the assurance of a mature and well-trained expert. He viewed the question of Indian freedom in the context of colonialism in general and the Islamic lands in particular. For him, the emancipation of India from the shackles of British imperialism was a necessary condition for breaking the chains that had been and were being forged by Western imperialist nations, principally British, to bind Islamic lands. Indian soldiers had been used everywhere to enslave other lands and peoples. For the Maulana, therefore, the Indian national struggle was not only a duty to the motherland but also to Islam.

For what the Maulana wrote in his paper and his suspected revolutionary activities, he was interned in Ranchi in 1916. At Ranchi, too, though I had not yet met him personally, I was in touch with him through mutual friends in the revolutionary movement of those days.

The Maulana Sahib was released from detention in 1920. The Independence and the Khilafat movements had already started under Gandhiji's leadership. The prominent Moslem leaders in the movement were Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Sahib and the Ali brothers. The last, the Ali brothers, were then the most active and popular leaders. They were a contrast to the first three, who were urbane, refined and sensitive, but more useful in the Council Chamber than at public meetings and demonstrations. Maulana Sahib was often present at public and Khilafat gatherings, but he would quietly and unobtrusively take his place at the back of the platform; he would rarely speak. But when he was prevailed upon to do so, it was a delight to listen to his silvery eloquence and well-reasoned presentation of a cause he had made his own. There was no effort to rouse emotions. Yet, in his case reason could be so reasonably convincing that it did affect the emotions. Once I asked Gandhiji why he appeared to prefer the Ali brothers with their exuberant spirit and loud tone to the intellectual, cultural and retiring Maulana Sahib. Gandhiji's reply was significant. He said that he knew the great learning of the Maulana and his refined ways, but however much he tried to induce him to the forefront, he would resist the attempt. This would not make for leadership of a popular movement. I have not related this talk to make any invidious comparison but in the interest of historical truth and to bring out the character of the Maulana.

But what he lacked in mass appeal at the time was more than made up by his unswerving and steady loyalty

to his ideals of national independence and Hindu-Moslem unity. Many of his Moslem compatriots of those days fell a prey to the British policy of keeping the two major communities apart, but the Maulana remained always faithful to the path he had chalked out for himself in his early youth. He steadily worked on, undeterred by the opposition of his community and the insults heaped upon him.

In 1923, he was chosen the President of the special session of the Congress held in Delhi. It was his moderating influence that avoided a cleavage at the time between the Pro-Changers and the No-Changers.

What then are the outstanding impressions left on those who had the privilege of being associated with the Maulana for more than three decades, particularly in the days of India's struggle for Independence? It is that in matters fundamental, he had thought out things for himself in his early youth and had come to certain definite conclusions. These were that India must be free, free not only for its own sake but for the sake of the rest of the colonial world, including the Islamic countries. There was, therefore, no cleavage between his duties as a citizen of India and as a Moslem divine. Also, when like some others, he joined the non-violent movement for the independence of India under Gandhiji's leadership, he did so with the utmost sincerity and conviction. He realized that the only way to Independence was to bring into the movement the masses of India, without whose combined action freedom of the country would be impossible. This could only be done through avoidance of secrecy and through non-violence. Fortified by this conviction, he never wavered in his faith or in the leadership of Gandhiji. Of course, like many others he did not believe in non-violence as a creed, but he remained loyal to the policy that had been adopted by the Congress after due and careful thought and consideration on practical grounds of what was possible. For Maulana Sahib,

there was no further toying with the idea of a violent revolution or association with its advocates. The same cannot be said of several other leaders, specially in Bengal.

These convictions stood the test of time. No vicissitude in his own political life or the alignment of forces in the country could change them. No misrepresentation of his motives, no calumny, no insults from inferior persons — and he was a sensitive soul — could deflect him from the path he had chosen for himself. He, who stood for good sense and moderation in all things, stood like a rock where his basic convictions were concerned. About these there could be no compromise.

Though my personal association with the Maulana began in 1920, it was as a member of the Congress Working Committee and the General Secretary of the Congress that I came in close contact with him. It was not always possible for me to see eye to eye with Maulana Sahib in all the details of the Congress Party, or on particular issues, but one could not fail to appreciate his general approach to national problems and his intellectual grasp of things. It was also difficult not to be impressed by his scholarship, which was deep and wide. It did not sit heavy on him. For years the Congress Working Committee was just like a family, and in the family circle Maulana Sahib's great scholarship and his genial temperament enlivened his conversation whenever we of the Congress Working Committee met at lunch, tea or dinner, or when at Wardha we enjoyed the simple but arge-hearted hospitality of that patriot of the mercantile community, Jamuna Lal Bajaj.

The company was regaled with anecdotes drawn from history, geography and the biographies of great personages in history, particularly from Islamic countries. He would tell us where a particular custom rose or from where a particular fruit or dish was introduced in India. With Sarojini Naidu's not always quite innocent gossip, with Sardar's humorous sallies and Maulana Sahib's

learned and well-informed conversation, the company never lacked interest. I believe that in those anxious days of our struggle for Independence, full of complicated difficulties, we enjoyed life with a zest that can come only from tension created by a high and noble purpose.

From the very beginning of his career, the Maulana Sahib was something of an internationalist. The circumstances of his birth, upbringing, and education and studies endowed him with a wide perspective. As an Islamic divine one would have expected him to be rather orthodox in his religious views. But his attitude towards religion was very liberal and catholic. This was not because he was indifferent or easy-going but because of his philosophical and historical knowledge and his understanding and generous heart. With his innate goodness, it was impossible for him to think that salvation for humanity lay through a particular religion, a particular prophet or one set of doctrines, rituals and dogmas. For instance, he would not have considered that the men of other faiths with whom he was associated in national life, would have been better or more acceptable to him if they had but accepted Islam. This was the attitude of some Moslem leaders who took part in the Khilafat and the national movement in the 'twenties. Maulana considered that the essence of religion lay in moral conduct and, if one delved deeper into the dark recesses of life, in mysticism. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was right when in Parliament, paying tribute to his memory, he said that the Maulana Sahib reminded him of scholars and humanists of the European Renaissance and the French Encyclopaedists of the 18th century. I wonder if when Jawaharlalji said this, he realized that while Maulana's thought was free as theirs, in his actions in social life his conduct like theirs was restricted and inhibited by well-established custom and convention. May be, like them and the great Hindu philosophers and pandits, Maulana Azad realized that the learned had no

right to confuse the understanding of the ordinary man wedded to form and convention so long as these were not harmful. Yet the Maulana also appreciated those who deviated from social conventions in order to meet the requirements of modern life and thought. It is this trait in the Maulana Sahib that prevented him from being a religious and social reformer. His very intellectual range precluded him from a role which needs an amount of dogmatism, if not fanaticism.

His was essentially a voice of reason, which would also mean moderation and sanity. These qualities were characteristic of him even in the revolutionary fight for India's Independence. Though he guided the crowd, he was shy of it; he was not of it. Gandhiji influenced many aristocrats by birth or position to rub shoulders with the crowd in those days. But the Maulana throughout remained his own self, an aristocratic intellectual who viewed the crowd with indulgence from his great eminence.

However, all this did not make him insensitive to justice and fair play. It is well known that after Independence many popular causes had his support in the counsels of the mighty created by the new order. Among them his was an independent voice. Where none could oppose, he ventured to remonstrate. On rare occasions, he did succeed. On his death, it was thus natural for popular opinion to feel that the restraining influence of sanity had disappeared from the political life of the country.

The Maulana was pre-eminently an intellectual and a scholar. Like several other leaders in the national movement, given a free choice, he would not have entered the political arena and would have pursued in quiet the life of letters. But in a subject country, there can be no free choice for the sensitive and the conscientious. It is not politics that draws them. It is the cause of justice and patriotism that beckons them to the barricades. We often hear of the sacrifices made in the cause of freedom, but no sacrifice is as great as that which obliges a



person to leave his work in life, the work for which he has an aptitude and a genius, to join the freedom fight. This supreme sacrifice was made by the Maulana Sahib, but it would appear that this great sacrifice did not leave the world of letters and learning impoverished. The books that Maulana Sahib produced are monumental. Among them is the commentary on the Holy Quran. His autobiography, which he had just finished, will soon see the light of day. If he had devoted his life to letters alone and let the stirring events of the Independence movement pass him by, it is possible that his writings, though numerous, might have lacked the maturity and wisdom of a life passed in a strenuous struggle with its elements of suffering and even of tragedy.

Here then was Maulana Sahib, a great divine, a great scholar, a great orator in Urdu, a great fighter for national freedom. With all his fervent love for the country, he was an internationalist at the core. Great as was his contribution to the freedom fight, his memory will live more as a harmonious personality, full of knowledge and wisdom.

It is therefore nothing to wonder that the common man instinctively felt a great anxiety when he came to learn about the serious condition of Maulana's health a couple of days before his death. The mournful demonstration after his death that was witnessed in Delhi, and the universal sorrow and gloom in which the country was enveloped, showed that the common people, who had but a rare and distant glimpse of him, knew what they had lost; a philosopher, friend and guide. It was truly said by his vocal admirers that with him passed away an epoch of Indian history and Indian cultural values which can perhaps never again be re-created. The Maulana was one of the bright gems of this epoch.

## *A Resplendent Personality*

IN THE JAIL at Ahmednagar where Maulana Azad, as President of the Indian National Congress, was confined along with his colleagues of the Working Committee, as a result of the adoption of the Quit India resolution in August 1942, I often found him murmuring to himself in a deep undertone a couplet from the Arab poet, Abul Ala Maari, meaning :

*We are of those for whom there is no middle station  
in life,  
We occupy the pinnacles or we seek the depths of the  
grave.*

Another line also, and this from a Persian poet, had an equal fascination for him in those days :

*The taste of me may be insipid ; but my worth is great ;  
I am a fruit grown before the season.*

The two couplets typify the mind of Maulana Azad. He always stood by himself, as a personality apart, and consequently his worth cannot be measured by the common standard. Whatever the role he was called upon to fulfil in life, whether as scholar, man of letters, thinker, politician, leader of men, or fighter in the cause of liberty, truth and justice, he lent to it a dignity and poise entirely his own.

It was as one learned in the Islamic lore and as an originator of a new style of expression in Urdu that Maulana Azad first attracted my attention. That was in

1906. I had read some of the essays which he had contributed to his own journal, *Lisan-as-Sidq* ('The Tongue of Truth') and to the *Vakil* of Amritsar. I was then just seventeen years old. So high was the estimation formed of him in my mind that I dared not venture to go to him direct. The interview was sought at Lucknow through an elderly scholar of the time whom I knew, Allama Abdullah Imadi. Prior to my introduction, I had expected to meet in Maulana Azad a venerable personality. But I was taken aback when I had to face a mere youth, more or less of my age (he was actually eighteen), of thin physique, rosy cheeks, and starlit eyes, tastefully dressed, impressively cool and collected in behaviour, and gifted with engaging conversational talents. He appeared to me a Prince come from a fairyland, and not exactly a Maulana. I was not alone in receiving such an amazing impression of him at this time of his life. Even elderly men like the late Maulana Hali, Dr. Sir Mohd. Iqbal and Sir Abdul Qader had expressed an equal surprise when they first beheld him at an annual meeting of the Anjuman-e-Islamia, Lahore, to which he had been invited. He had been scheduled to address the Anjuman on no less a subject than 'Rationalism in Islam'. The elderly organizers of the meeting who received him were at first under the impression that Maulana Azad, the Editor of *Lisan-as-Sidq* had sent his son to read out his paper on the subject assigned to him. Their amazement knew no bounds when they were told that it was he who was Abul Kalam.

The second time I met him was in 1908 at Aligarh when he kindly came to visit me in my room at the M. A. O. College. Soon after, I left for England and when I came back to India in 1912, Maulana Azad, as Editor of *Al-Hilal*, had already become a name to conjure with. He was heading a powerful political awakening in the land, and he was then 24.

Maulana Azad came of a scholarly family of Delhi. Born at Mecca while his father was in exile there, and

educated on the return of his parents to India in the traditional Islamic lore at the Madrasas of Calcutta, he had an opportunity to go round the countries of West Asia even while he was a youth. At Cairo, where he stayed for some time, he imbibed the spirit of the reformatory movement which had been launched by Syed Jamaluddin Afghani and Shayk Muhammad Abduh. The former was the leader of a powerful Pan-Islamic movement intent on the emancipation of the West Asian countries from the imperialistic hold, particularly of Britain. It was the influence of these two great scholars which stimulated the mind of the young Abul Kalam to inaugurate a like movement in his own country.

From the very day of its inception, *Al-Hilal* had pitted itself against the retention of British power in India, and that was not an easy thing to do for any journal in the atmosphere of the times, particularly for one started by a member of the minority community which had doggedly been denied Governmental favours since the days of the Indian Revolution of 1857. The policy of divide-and-rule had reached its climax by the time *Al-Hilal* appeared on the scene, so much so that the Moslems of India had developed the mood to placate the British Government in every possible way and receive favours at their hands. To rouse such a people to action against the British authorities in the land was, on the face of it, a vain venture. But the young editor of the journal felt otherwise. He realized that it was only in moments of depression, such as existed at the time in India, that mighty energies could be released for heroic deeds, and he sounded his trumpet call:

‘ There comes in the history of nations a time when the desire to live becomes a sin, and there is no greater sin than to live on. At such a time, the number of those behind high walls and iron bars increases and the trade of the ironmonger splendidly thrives. Ropes hang on

the branches of trees, and wooden planks are aloft for the sons of Adam to walk on to their doom. Such a day comes only to usher in another day, when the seed sown by executions puts forth the fruit of a living and abiding life.'

That was the tempo of *Al-Hilal* when it was started, and Maulana wrote :

' My resolve is not to seek a task, but to seek first men to do it. In this world, there never was any lack of tasks. But there has always been a dearth of men to undertake them. The present age is an age of wars. All around us are hosts of enemies, and there is not a single corner where armours do not ring. So, there is no lack of fields for action. Those who possess the spirit of a soldier and the courage of a hero must come out to face life as they find it and face its trials. I assert once again that there is no lack of tasks. What we really lack among us are patriots and fighters.'

The call of Maulana was heard throughout the country. The Balkan war with its tragic consequences to the Moslems abroad afforded occasion for action. It roused the readers of *Al-Hilal* to a frenzied state of mind to pull down the edifice of British imperialism in the land, and I for my part could not help being caught by the wave of emotion which passed over us at the time.

It was again at Lucknow that I next met Maulana. The occasion was the meeting of the Foundation Committee appointed by the Moslem Educational Conference at Aligarh to set up a Moslem university at Aligarh. This was the time when the reputation of *Al-Hilal* was at its highest, and Maulana was being looked upon as the soldier of freedom *par excellence*. The meeting was held at the Baradari of Qaisar Bagh. The moment he entered the hall, cries were raised from every corner of

it that he should address them. Those who had already made up their mind to support the acceptance of the terms of the Government did not feel comfortable at the thought of Maulana making any speech at all at the meeting. But the cry was incessant; and when he did speak, the feeling against the motion grew so intense among the audience that it was resolved that the terms offered be rejected. The speech signified an emphatic divergence from the Aligarh attitude in politics. Maulana was of the decided opinion that the Moslems of India should give up altogether their profession of loyalty to the British Government and release their mind to express itself boldly in favour of freedom from its age-long domination.

*Al-Hilal* naturally could not be tolerated by the British authorities in the country. The story of its suspension and the starting of *Al-Balagh* and of its suspension also is well-known, as also the story of Maulana's prolonged internment at Ranchi. It was a period of hard experiences and firm resolves. So, when he came out of Ranchi in the year 1920, he took to an intensely active political life. In the pages of *Al-Hilal*, he had already powerfully advanced the view that the solution for the Moslem problem in India lay in a hearty co-operation in politics with their Hindu brethren. But after Ranchi, this became an obsession with him.

That was the time when Mahatma Gandhi entered the political arena in India. Maulana met him for the first time during that year at Delhi. The occasion was the assemblage of Hindu and Moslem leaders to consider the question of forming a joint deputation to wait upon the Viceroy. The manner in which Maulana Azad opposed the move and recommended instead absolute non-co-operation with the British Government was so well appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi that a bond of lasting friendship was forged at once between the two mighty minds. From 1920 till Mahatmaji's tragic death

in 1948, the two marched hand in hand together to victory.

The period (1920-1947) was one of strenuous struggle against British imperialism. It began with the Khilafat and non-co-operation movement. The march for freedom was marked by repeated incarceration of the two leaders and their colleagues and co-workers. But it ended in the disappearance of the British Empire in India. Unfortunately, the freedom gained was not of the type the two leaders had dreamt of. It was accompanied by sorrow and suffering and the partition of the country. An account of this lengthy ordeal does not appropriately fall within the purview of the subject assigned to me in this volume. It will be dealt with by others. I may only refer to an episode in this epic struggle which may throw light on the personality of the Maulana. I refer to his arrest along with C. R. Das, and his subsequent trial in Calcutta in 1921, which elicited a statement from him addressed to the Court which should form a distinct chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom.

This document, which he addressed to the presiding Judge, was in Urdu and was subsequently published under the title of *Qawl-e-Faisal* or *Final Verdict*. I quote from this a few brief passages just to show of what stuff Maulana was made.

*How befitting it would be if the cup-bearer stigmatizes  
me of drunkenness ;  
For my cup still smells of the drink I took last night.*

'Praise be to God Unique.

'I had no intention to give any verbal or written statement here. This is a place where we have neither any hopes to cherish, nor any desires to wish, nor even any complaints to make. This is only a turnstile without passing through which we cannot reach our destination. Therefore, for a short while, we are obliged to

break our journey here. Had it not been so, we would have gone straightaway to jail....

'History bears witness that whenever the ruling class took up arms against freedom and truth, the law-courts served as the most convenient and unfailing weapons for them.... Next to battlefields, the greatest acts of injustice in the world have been committed in the law courts. Right from the revered founders of religions to those who have laboured in the field of science to bring comfort to human life, there was no noble group of men who were not produced as criminals before the courts of unjust governments.... I admit that the terrible Roman courts of the second century, or the mysterious inquisitions of the Middle Ages do not exist any more. But I am not prepared to admit that human nature in our times has been purged of the emotions under which those courts worked....

'I confess that I have used similar or even more emphatic language not merely in the two speeches under review, but in several other speeches as well which I have had to deliver during the course of the last two years. To speak in that strain is an imperative duty for me, and I cannot desist from discharging it simply because of the threat that it would be regarded a crime under Section 124-A. I want to repeat that language even now, and will go on repeating it so long as I can talk. And if I do not do so, I shall consider myself guilty of a heinous crime....

'I believe that liberty is the birthright of every nation and individual. No man, nor any man-made bureaucracy, possesses the right to enslave human beings. Howsoever attractive the names that we may coin for slavery, slavery will remain slavery all the same. It is imposed on man by man against the will of God. Therefore, I refuse to accept the present Government as a rightful government, and consequently think it



to be a national, religious and human duty to relieve my country and nation of their servitude. . . .

'I am a Musalman, and as such, my religious duty is the same. Islam does not recognize any autocracy or bureaucracy. It came in to restore the lost freedom of humanity, the freedom which had been confiscated by kings, foreign governments, selfish religious leaders, and powerful elements of society. The autocrats thought that might was right; but Islam proclaimed from its very birth that might was not right. It swept off all racial and national distinctions and showed the world at large that all human beings held an equal rank, and all possessed equal rights. It proclaimed that excellence did not lie in race, nationality or colour. It was only righteous action which counted, and the noblest among men was he who did his work most righteously.

'Such was the charter of human rights issued eleven hundred years before the French Revolution. It was not a mere pronouncement, but a practical order of life which was set up and which, in the words of the historian Gibbon, "has no equal" . . . .

'In this world, "evil" like "good" desires to live. However much we may dislike "evil", we cannot condemn its urge to live. The struggle for survival between the two has already begun in India; and this is by no means an extraordinary phenomenon. If in the eyes of bureaucracy, it is a crime to struggle for freedom and righteousness and those, who in the name of justice are out to put an end to their unjustified presence in the land, are to be regarded as criminals and punished, then I confess that I am a criminal. I am one of those who have sown the seed of this crime in the heart of the people, and have devoted their whole life to water the plant. I am the first among the Moslems of India to invite in 1920 the entire nation to indulge in this crime, and have within three years roused in

them the urge to come out of the maze in which the craftiness of the Government had wilfully kept them. . . .

‘ My firm conviction is that I should preach this gospel as a matter of sacred duty. I cannot abstain from discharging it simply because Section 124-A terms it a crime. Even now, I say what I have said before, and will go on repeating it so long as I have any breath left in me.’

The concluding paragraph of this document, while asking the Judge to make haste in winding up the proceedings, ends with these words :

‘ My Magistrate !

‘ I shall not take any more time of the Court. It is a very interesting and instructive chapter of history which we both are equally busy in preparing. While I get the criminals’ dock, to you comes the magisterial seat ; but I admit that for this work your seat is as much important as this dock. Come then, let us finish quickly this memorable act which is soon to become a legend. The historian is watching us. Allow me to occupy this place repeatedly and you may also go on writing your judgments as often. The process will continue for some time, and then the gates of another court will open wide. That will be the Court of the Lord where Time will act as Judge. It will pass the judgment, and that will be the final Judgment.

‘ And praise be to God in the beginning and in the end.’

The words have a prophetic ring about them. In his very lifetime, the gates of God’s Court were thrown open, and he heard the judgment delivered by Time to which he had pointed.

It was during the first phase of Maulana’s active political life after his release from Ranchi that I decided

to work with him. Once the decision was taken, I cheerfully went through the mill with him and others till the light of freedom came to us and the country at large.

To speak of the personality of Maulana is not easy. He was a man of many parts. The world knows him by his scholarship and by the tremendous sacrifices which he made for his country. But the distinguishing qualities of his mind and heart were such that only those who had intimate connection with him could know. I may refer here to but a few qualities which have left a deep impression on my mind.

Maulana had inherited the great respect in which his family had been held. Thousands of Moslems in Bengal loved him as the son of a great religious *pir*. When his father died in 1909, his huge following came to acclaim Maulana Azad as his successor and offered *nazars* or gifts. Maulana would not accept the *nazars*. He said that these gifts, which were mostly in the form of money presents, should go back to the poorer among their families, and he adhered to this attitude throughout his life. In the most trying moments of life, he would not communicate even to the most intimate of his friends that he was in straitened circumstances. Whatever came to him through his own exertion he shared with the less fortunate around him even in the days of his Ministership. He was averse to keeping anything for himself for the morrow. The old proverb held good in his case. The left hand did not know what the right hand gave away. He was very unhappy when he was reminded by anyone of the favours received at his hands.

Another trait which distinguished Maulana was his aversion to speak harshly of those who had shown harshness to him in life. Everyone knows how a section of the Moslems always treated him for his criticism of the weaknesses which had crept into Islam and which a good many Moslems cherished as religion. Never for once did

he answer the gibes levelled at him. Mr. Jinnah's behaviour towards him is well-known, but never for a moment would he think of retaliating. I remember the great meeting that was held in Lucknow after the partition. Even those Moslems who had derided Maulana in the pre-partition days had come to realize how mistaken they were in their political attitude. They were present at the gathering. So, when Maulana came to address the huge concourse, almost everyone expected that he would take the occasion to condemn Mr. Jinnah and tear to pieces the policy which he had pursued resulting in unhappiness to so many, but he would not condemn anyone. The very first words which came out of his mouth were: 'I have not come here to condemn anyone. What was not to have happened has happened. We have now to think of the future.' The words created a deep impression on the audience. They realized that Maulana was made of a moral texture worthy of the really great. Never in his lifetime did he ever speak a harsh word about Mr. Jinnah. If by chance old memories were revived for him, he would simply say with a sigh: 'Why expose the scar on one's own heart. No one is to blame. I alone am to blame. I was so incompetent that I could not succeed in keeping back the Moslems of India from committing deliberate suicide.'

Another quality of the mind of Maulana which impressed me immensely was his versatility. Whatever the subject of discussion in any private gathering or conversation dealing with literature, philosophy, religion, politics or science, whether of the East or of the West, he used to take a scholarly interest and offer comments such as only those deeply conversant therewith could offer. He had a prodigious memory and could recite appropriate lines from poetry and narrate with ease and precision events forgotten long ago.

Maulana was a hard worker. Whatever the task that was entrusted to him, he would throw himself into it

with zeal, and sometimes he overworked himself. And whatever moments of leisure he could snatch from the work in hand, he would occupy himself with reading some new work that came out of the press dealing with subjects of interest to him. It is not well-known that through his self-study he had acquired a remarkable proficiency in the English language such as enabled him to be in touch with the latest thought in science, literature, philosophy and politics. So obsessed was he with his work and his reading that it was with the greatest reluctance that he would agree to give interviews to visitors. People attributed this to lack of courtesy. But the fact is that he had no taste for idle talk. Whenever he thought that something good would result to anyone or to the country at large, he would readily consent to give interviews to those who sought them.

One great quality of Maulana was the quickness with which he would get at the marrow of things. He could sift the dross from the gold with the facility of an adept. That was the quality which impressed all those who had the opportunity to work with him. On occasions of deliberations in huge gatherings when confusion prevailed in thought due to conflicting ways of approach to the problem at issue, the mind of Maulana would concentrate on the essentials and find a way out agreeable to the contending parties. He would never lose his head in the midst of tumult and disorder, but coolly and with firmness collect the minds around him to think the problem before them on certain definite lines, and help them to reach a solution such as the occasion demanded. That was why even while he was in his 'twenties he was called upon by venerable heads like Shaik-ul-Hind of Deoband and Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangimahal to preside over the meetings of the Khilafat conferences, and that was why he was called upon at the age of 35 by grey-headed politicians and literary geniuses like Pandit Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali and

Dr. Ansari, to be the President of the Indian National Congress.

One supreme quality in him which distinguished him from all others was the firmness of his resolve. He took decisions after cool and careful deliberation, and once he took a decision he adhered to it with such tenacity that no one could prevail upon him to budge from his position. It was this peculiarity in him that the late Maulana Mohammad Ali used to designate as 'stubbornness'.

From the time he started his *Al-Hilal*, one supreme idea functioned in his mind rendering every activity of his subservient to it, and that was the freedom of his country to be achieved through Hindu-Moslem unity. His emphasis was on unity more than on freedom, for his belief was that freedom was bound to come one day. He said.

'If an angel were to descend from the high heavens and proclaim from the heights of the Qutub Minar, "Discard Hindu-Moslem unity and within 24 hours Swaraj is yours", I will refuse the proffered Swaraj, but will not budge an inch from my stand. The refusal of Swaraj will affect only India while the end of our unity will be the loss of the entire human world.'

That was exactly the attitude of Gandhiji on the question of unity and freedom. In the Khilafat and non-co-operation movements, Maulana felt he was witnessing the fulfilment of his dreams but the developments which followed were a source of immense disquietude to him. There arose around him deep and forbidding darkness; the darkness pained his sensitive soul; but he doggedly steered his way through it to destiny. Neither the constant persecutions of the authorities, nor the ever mounting tirades of his own brethren, nor even the bitings of a

bitter Jinnah could deter him from his purpose. He would not compromise with evil.

Maulana's passionate calls were not heeded. The differences between the two communities multiplied as time went on, ending in the catastrophe of 1947. I know what that meant to Maulana. Every dagger one Indian thrust into the body of another was a dagger thrust into his own soul. He bore the agony in silence, but resolutely set his mind to the task of re-building India on new foundations. The foresight and the wisdom which he brought to bear on the task and the magnificent manner in which he lent his co-operation to his colleagues in the Government to steady the course of the country in moments of crisis, will not easily be forgotten by all concerned. In fact, this was borne out by the wave of sorrow that passed through every Indian heart when he suddenly passed away in the early hours of 22 February, 1958.

Now that he has gone, his greatness has all of a sudden been recognized by one and all. When I say this, I do not mean that in his lifetime he was not regarded as great or respected as such. Had it been otherwise, I dare say, he would not have been elected twice as the President of the All-India National Congress, nor entrusted with a pivotal position in the delicate negotiations which were carried on in the final days of India's struggle for freedom. In truth he was great from the first to the last. He was destined to be among those great sons of India whose function it was to cheer us in moments of despair, to guide us, to show us the way, to lead us on, to solve our problems, and add authority to our decisions. I know that his inner loneliness and his characteristic reserve were at times liable to be misunderstood. But this reserve was only a way to conserve his energy for potent expression in moments of dire need. In the death of Maulana, we have lost a part of our own selves. India has lost not only a great and illustrious son, but a great friend and a wise leader. But we have to bear the loss and undeterred by

the ephemeral discomforts of the day, pursue his ideal, the ideal of Hindu-Moslem unity for which Mahatma Gandhi laid down his life, and for which Maulana Azad lived till his last moments.



## *As I Knew Him*

I WAS ASKED early this year to make a contribution to the Birthday Souvenir that was to be presented to Maulana Azad during the celebration of his seventieth birthday. But now I have, with great sorrow, to write of the past for a souvenir which can never be presented to him.

Though Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was in failing health for some years, nobody imagined that the end was so near, as we all had hoped Maulana would be spared to us for a long time yet and that his valuable advice would continue to be available to the nation. The news of the sudden illness of Maulana Azad followed by his sad death on 22 February, was a painful shock to me. Even now it is difficult to realize that he is no more. To me he was a great leader in whom I had immense faith and he was also a very dear and trusted friend. He was ever kind and affectionate to me and I could always depend on his advice when I sought it. My grief is great and I find it difficult now to write about him.

The Maulana was a towering personality who influenced the Independence movement for nearly half a century. His deep study, his wide knowledge and vast experience added to his natural gifts of ability to understand difficult situations and problems. It was these gifts which made him so great a leader and so wise a counsellor. During the First World War he was so frank in his journal, *Al-Hilal*, about the conduct of the war, that he was interned at Ranchi to stop him from writing and talking in a manner that would make people think and see what was wrong with British rule in India. Maulana Sahib tried to influence his countrymen that their first objective

should be the attainment of freedom, as without it no progress in any sphere, whether political, economic or cultural, could make headway in India. On Gandhiji's active entry into the Indian political arena, it was natural for a great patriot like Maulana Sahib to feel that here was a leader who could lead us towards the haven of Independence and to follow him with devotion and loyalty. Gandhiji appreciated his great virtues and soon he became known as one of the 'Big Five' who helped Gandhiji to mould the freedom movement, and was trusted by him as a valued colleague. His faith in Gandhiji's leadership remained to the end, and he was one of the chief men to whom Mahatmaji turned for advice whenever difficult problems arose. On occasions when Maulana Sahib found that he could not fully accept what Mahatmaji put forward, he frankly told him that he did not quite agree, but in the end when a decision was made, he carried it out faithfully as a loyal Congressman. Patriotism and loyalty are as valuable as honesty and integrity in political leaders and statesmen, and it was these qualities which made Maulana Sahib a great figure.

During the troubled times when it looked as if the Congress would split on the Council entry programme, it was Maulana Sahib who found honourable compromises, and it was really his wisdom and political foresight which helped the Swaraj Party to enter the Councils without leaving the Congress. Thereby the differences between the Pro-Changers and the No-Changers were smoothly solved when he became President at the Delhi session of the Congress. As President, his was the task to carry on negotiations both with Sir Stafford Cripps and the Cabinet Mission. He did this to the satisfaction of his colleagues on the Working Committee and the Congress organization. He kept in the forefront the interests of the country while carrying on the discussions. As everyone knows, the Cripps Mission

broke down on the basis of Cabinet responsibility which the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was not willing to accept, though Sir Stafford in his conversations did make the Maulana understand that this was implied in his proposals. Soon after the war in Europe ended, Maulana also took part in the conversations at Simla for an interim Government with Lord Wavell. Here again, in spite of Maulana's great patience and fairness, the Simla meeting failed owing to the unfair and exacting demands made by the Muslim League leaders. The same was the disappointing result again when, after the failure of the Cabinet Mission's attempt, conversations took place between the Viceroy and the political leaders for forming an interim Government. Evidently, Lord Wavell was much impressed by the sincerity and patriotism of the Congress leaders and he formed an interim Government without the League being in it. Maulana Sahib later became one of the members of that Government and continued to be in the successive Cabinets until his sudden death.

It was clear that he was not at all happy about the partition of the country, but like his other colleagues, he accepted it because of the circumstances in which the country was situated at the time. His great service to the nation was the way in which he exhorted his co-religionists to stand by the Independence movement and not to raise the communal issue. In spite of great opposition by Mr. Jinnah and other Moslems, and the fanaticism roused by them among the Moslem masses and the abuses hurled at him, the Maulana Sahib kept his faith in unadulterated nationalism burning to the end and condemned communalism as most harmful to progress of every kind.

He was one of the three members of the Parliamentary Board when Congress decided to take office after getting certain assurances under the 1935 Act, and was most helpful to the Congress Ministries in the provinces. Though he was not in actual charge of my own State of Madras, I know how helpful he was to Sardar Patel

who was actually in charge of my province, in getting rid of differences that had arisen and in smoothening the conduct of the administration.

Maulana Sahib was, of course, a great scholar and very much interested in our cultural advancement. His outlook was broad as a member of humanity, and not of any particular creed and community. His nature was gentle and compassionate, and he tried to help in solving difficult problems with real sympathy and understanding as well as wisdom. His conduct was always so honourable that throughout our country and in the world, he was respected for the high standard of honesty and integrity he applied in his life. He was a great example of the synthesis of our culture and believed in the inherent strength of our composite culture. His sense of duty was equally remarkable. Even though he was in failing health, he insisted on presiding over meetings of the governing body and of the general body of our cultural association a few days before his death, when he made a pronouncement which will always be remembered. It was he who suggested that we should now extend the activities of our cultural association to foreign countries and that it would be good to have cultural centres opened for the understanding of Indian civilization and philosophy and their value to the wide world.

It is an acknowledged fact that Maulana Sahib was a sane adviser and that his first aim was to consider seriously what is right. When he found that a certain policy or action was right and honourable, he never hesitated in putting forward his views. He considered deeply every matter of importance and once he was convinced as to what was the correct thing to do with regard to any problem, he never wavered from that decision. One could always go to him for advice in moments of stress and after great consideration he gave advice which one could not neglect if one was really anxious to do the right thing.

We have lost in the Maulana a great savant, a scholar of wide learning, a great fighter for freedom and a wise statesman. He leaves a permanent void at a time when his experience and wisdom would have been of immense value to our country.

Our Prime Minister has all our sympathy in the irreparable loss of an old and valued colleague so suddenly. As the Prime Minister rightly said, the whole nation has been left desolate by his death. Even though the Maulana Sahib is not physically with us, I feel that his high example and his great contribution to the progress of our country will always inspire us to do our best in the service of our country.

## *A Great Indian*

As I look back on the years from the beginning of this century, the most momentous year in the history of our country seems to be the year 1906, when the British decided that the only way they could perpetuate their rule was by dividing the Hindus and the Moslems. The agitation following the partition of Bengal showed clearly that under the enlightened leadership of the Indian National Congress, India would turn out to be a united country and be able to overthrow British power in India. It is no secret now that the Muslim League was founded in that year by a group of Aligarh-trained Moslems led by the Aga Khan, under the inspiration of the British authorities. The urge came from the British and found many Moslems willing to dance to the tune. The seed of communal disagreement was sown leading to communal electorates.

The man who saw through this game then and consistently stuck to his point of view is unfortunately no longer with us. Through thick and thin, and through dark and gloomy days, Maulana Azad was with us and led us to the goal of an independent India. For future generations it is worth while recording that since Maulana Sahib started his paper *Al-Hilal* in 1912, he has waged unrelenting war against the policy and efforts to divide Hindus and Moslems. Time has shown that his unerring foresight led him to see clearly and point out to his countrymen and co-religionists that mankind is one race and we have to live in harmony with one another. More than once he had quoted from the Quran: 'Oh Prophet! I have prescribed a particular form of worship for every

group of people, which it observes. Men should not therefore quarrel about these forms.' But Maulana's sane advice did not have much effect on a section of Indian Moslems. Those that invented the absurd theory that there must not be any music before mosques were rewarded and knighted. Those that preached that there are two nations in India were lauded to the skies. And finally to crown it all, separate electorates were thrust on the country, in spite of the vehement opposition of the Congress and the Nationalist Moslems. There was a large and growing volume of opinion even among the members of the Muslim League in favour of joint electorates, but this group was never consulted at any time. All through this period, Maulana Azad led a valiant band who believed in the unity of all human beings. In 1940, he showed them the path in the following ringing words:

'I would remind my co-religionists that today I stand exactly where I stood in 1912, when I addressed them on this issue. I have given thought to those innumerable occurrences which have happened since then; my eyes have watched them, my mind has pondered over them. These events did not merely pass me by; I was in the midst of them, a participant, and I examined every circumstance with care. I cannot quarrel with my own convictions; I cannot stifle the voice of my conscience. I repeat today what I have said throughout the entire period, that the ninety millions of Moslems have no other right course of action than the one to which I invited them in 1912.'

No truer lead has been given by any other leader. In spite of this, Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah and his followers in the Muslim League kept on agitating that there were two nations in India. By repeating *ad nauseam* this untruth, they led some people to believe that there

was some truth in it. The writer of this article was the Honorary Secretary of the then Bengal Presidency Muslim League from 1928 to 1936. He was compelled to sever his connection with the Muslim League due to the League's unreasonable way of thinking. Nationalist Moslems, as they were then called, fought for the cause of the independence of the country under the banner of the Congress. During the time of the MacDonald Communal Award, a very large bulk of the Moslems were in favour of joint electorates. I remember we called a conference in 1936 in Calcutta in which we requested Mr. M. A. Jinnah to preside. The object of the Conference was to rally Moslem opinion in favour of joint electorates. I am of the opinion that 80 per cent of the persons who took part in the deliberations of that conference, were in favour of joint electorates. It was Mr. Jinnah who later raised the bogey of his 'two nations' theory and for the first time we heard that the Moslems should have another homeland of their own.

This was the breaking point. Nationalist Moslems dissociated themselves *en bloc* from the League and joined the Congress, under the leadership of Maulana Azad. Even after 1936, the Moslem contribution in the various nationalist movements, in the 1940 movement and in the Quit India movement, has been considerable. Thousands of Moslems courted jail and suffering, along with their Hindu brethren for the cause of the country. Maulana Azad had to be imprisoned again and again for the sake of his convictions. But that did not make the British authorities accept the truth that a large volume of Moslem opinion was in favour of united India and the system of joint electorates. Lest the Nationalist Moslems, if invited to the various conferences then going on with the British Government, present the same point of view as that of the Congress, they were never allowed to come to the front. For the British, the only true exponent of Moslem opinion was the League; the Nationalist



Moslems were called a microscopic minority, and Maulana Azad, their leader, a 'show-boy'.

Rarely in world history do we come across a leader who sees so far ahead of his times that he can also say like Christ, 'God forgive them, for they know not what they do'. Maulana Sahib must have felt like that in 1947. Maulana Sahib, who was the spokesman of the Congress, and conducted the talks with Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 and with Lord Wavell in the Simla Conference in 1945, was not listened to when it came to the preservation of the unity of India. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders tried their best to preserve the unity of India. It suited the purpose of the British to have a partition of the country. So Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was made the hero of the hour and the partition of the country became an accomplished fact. With what pang and sorrow Maulana Azad went through the events of these recent years, only those who knew him can realize. Many Moslems, who were with the Congress, went over to Pakistan. Maulana Sahib did not waver in his path and kept steadfastly showing the right path to the 40 million Moslems left in India.

Since writing the above, the news of Maulana Sahib's sudden death reached us on 22 February, 1958. The whole nation was stunned at the news. The appreciations that have appeared in the press, the meetings that have been held all over the country, show in what esteem he was held by the people. No doubt we have lost a great leader, no doubt a great Indian has passed away, but the peculiar kind of leadership he gave to the country will never be surpassed. At a time when communal passions held sway and a great many people were confused, he held steadfastly on to his principles. The Indian Constitution as it is today owes a great deal to him. His advice at critical times was listened to with respect, by all groups of people, to whatever Party they might belong.

It is too early as yet to evaluate Maulana Sahib's life and work. Those of us who had the privilege and honour of knowing him in life realize fully that the unity that we see in India today, the synthesis of religion and culture that is going on in India in the present day, the evolution of our lives along scientific lines, owe a great deal to Maulana Sahib's initiative as the first Education Minister of India.

In days to come when our children and grand-children read of the dedicated life of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, they will draw inspiration from one who was the embodiment of secular India and an architect of Independent India.

SAEED NAFICY

## *A Tribute from Iran*

**EVEN THOSE** who have only a casual knowledge of the history and literature of Iran cannot but be attracted to India, this vast land whose inhabitants have from the early dawn of civilization been associated in spiritual and material life with the people of Iran. India is perhaps the only country in the world which is familiar to all Iranians, and this is so because Indians and Iranians are descended from the same Aryan race of Asia. From the dawn of history when they crossed the desert of Pamcer and settled in these neighbouring lands, the people of India and Iran have maintained their contacts. Perhaps there is no other instance of such close relations between two countries as are exhibited by the relations of Iran and India.

I well remember my first visit to India, when at the age of fifteen I came here to collect some material for a history of Iran. From that day I have studied carefully every available book on India. The more my knowledge of India grew; the closer I came to this great country. In my early youth, I was thrilled by the names of Mahatma Gandhi and his well-known colleagues, who worked so hard for the freedom and liberation of their country. As I read books and articles on India, the two names which impressed me most were those of Jawaharlal Nehru on the one hand and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on the other. I made a detailed study of the life of these two great men and eagerly sought information about their literary work. In course of time, I became fully acquainted with the great effort and sacrifice they made in the national cause as colleagues and associates of Mahatma Gandhi.

After suffering from foreign domination for one hundred and fifty years, India regained her freedom in 1947. Political relations between India and Iran were restored soon after India became free. When the first Indian Ambassador to Iran, Syed Ali Zahir, came to Tehran I was perhaps the first person to win his friendship. I had then a great desire to visit India again. I was moved by the same impulse which in the past had carried Urfi, Zahuri, Naziri, Qudsi, Kalim and Saib and hundreds of other learned men of Iran to India. That was one of the golden periods of Indian history. If I were simply to mention the names of all the distinguished sons of Iran who came to India and produced their masterpieces here, it would become a voluminous book. The courts of Ghaznavids, Ghauris, the Sultanate of Delhi and provincial rulers, Khilji kings, Tuglaqs, Lodhis, rulers of Bengal, Jaipur, Malva, Gujrat, Kashmir, Khandesh, Gulbarga, Ahmadshahi, Nizam Shahi, Burid Shahi, Aadil Shahi, Qutab Shahi and Bahmanies have been places of refuge for many of them. In the reigns of Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, in fact until the advent of the British in India, there were no barriers between India and Iran. Any man of Iran could easily come to this great country which had such close relations with Iran.

This is surely the reason why history has repeated itself. The recovery of India's freedom is also a most welcome event for Iran. I envied my friends who visited India before me. There is no other country which I have longed to visit so much. In November, 1949, the Indian Ambassador in Tehran invited me to participate in the Peace Conference which was held in New Delhi that year. At the end of this conference, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad invited me to partake in a literary tour of the Universities and other educational institutions of his country.

I stayed in India for three and a half months (from 15 November, 1949, to 28 February, 1950) during this

visit. I was received cordially by the Universities of Aligarh, Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Calcutta, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Madras, Bombay and Trivandrum. In the course of the conference, I attended meetings in Bombay, Calcutta, Santiniketan, Sevagram and Delhi.

I have noted down in two voluminous diaries a thousand pleasant memories of my stay, but am sorry that I have not yet been able to take steps for their publication. During this visit, I went to Delhi twice. After meeting Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the greatest son of modern India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the next person whom I wished to meet. I was fully aware of the hardships he had suffered and the sacrifices he had made from early youth for the freedom of his country and for restoring the past glory of Asia. I also knew his pilgrimages to prisons. Two of his books, *Ghubari-Khatir* and *Tadhkirah*, which are masterpieces of the Urdu language, had already come to my notice. I was greatly impressed by the scope of these two books which revealed the wide scholarship of Maulana Azad, and particularly his deep knowledge of Islam and Persian poetry. I was also acquainted with his commentary on the Holy Quran. Later on, I wrote an introductory note on his articles about Dhulqarnain, when these were translated into Persian and published twice in Tehran.

The thing that pleased me most and attracted me towards Maulana Azad was his keen poetic genius. Of this there was evidence in all his books. On every page, I saw Persian verses, suitable, apt and charming. I was greatly surprised to find that he had such an extraordinary memory for Persian poems. They revealed how devoted he was to Persian literature and how deeply he had studied it. It seemed that they had become a part of his very being.

As soon as I arrived in Delhi, I was given the glad tidings of an interview with him. On 14 December,

1949, at 12 o'clock I reached the office of the Ministry of Education of the Indian Union to see the man for whom I had been longing for years. There I was introduced to Professor Humayun Kabir, now the Minister of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, then the Secretary of the Ministry of Education. A face chiselled by suffering, with embossed cheeks and fine lines, I had seen Maulana Azad in some of his portraits. I had formed the idea that such a self-sacrificing, literary and learned man must be engrossed in his work and simple and unassuming in his ways. The first meeting showed me that I was not wrong.

Maulana Azad was dressed in a khaki sherwani and a cap of black skin. I noticed his pointed moustaches and a small beard which was white at the chin. His complexion was like wheat and the bones of his cheeks were high. His tall but spare figure, which had not bowed even after years of suffering, showed his manly qualities. He spoke Persian with eloquence and fluency. It was clear that he was perfectly familiar with the Persian language and I was struck by his use of the verb *gashtan* for *Shudan*.

I talked to Maulana Azad for one full hour in the office of the Ministry of Education. It was quite clear from his conversation that he had made a deep study of the works of Moslem philosophers, and especially Persian and Arabic poets. He even remembered the number of books that these scholars and poets had produced. He was also fully conversant with the history and geography of Iran. He told me that in jail he studied mostly Persian books. We talked about Hekmat-i-Ishraq, Shahabuddin Suhrawardy, the works of Samdoq in Babuwayeh, Kitab-i-Usool-i-Kafi, Hadiqa-i-Sanai and Mathnavis of Attar. During our conversation, I referred to the story of *Nahvi and Millah* (Grammarians and the Boatman) which is in the *Mathnavi* of Maulana (*Rumi*). The story is that a grammarian asked a boatman if he had read grammar. The boatman answered in the negative.

The grammarian said, ' Half of your life has been wasted '. In the meantime there arose a storm and the boat was about to sink. The boatman asked the grammarian if he had learnt the art of swimming. He said, ' No '. The boatman replied that his whole life was then lost. When I mentioned this story, Maulana Azad laughed and recited the verses of this story from the beginning to the end.

Maulana Azad said that he wanted to develop a Persian library in the office of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. He asked me to prepare a list of books in Persian on literature, history, philosophy and mysticism. He also said I should include important books on Shia theology. He promised to get the books and stock them in the Council library.

In the course of our conversation, he called Mr. Masud, his private secretary, and asked him to prepare a programme for me to visit a dozen Universities of India. I spent one hour with this great man in this way. I remembered he was one of the great fighters for the independence of India. He was also a symbol of learning, humility and modesty. I discussed many things with him but the main topic of our talk was about cultural relations between India and Iran. At the end of this meeting, he asked me to see him on my return from Aligarh.

As I came out, I wrote the following sentences in my diary of that year. It is now before me. I quote the exact words: ' This meeting was very pleasant for me. I have realized that he is a very learned man. I had not imagined that he was such a great intellect. He is undoubtedly the equal of the most learned men of Iran. I am sure that few persons in India are so deeply read in Persian and Arabic literature. How fortunate is the country and the government that has such a wise and able Minister for Education.'

According to the appointment made on Wednesday, 14 January, 1950, Maulana Azad sent me his car at 1 p.m.

and it carried me to his residence. Mr. Ajmal Khan, Private Secretary of Maulana Azad, received me and led me to Maulana Azad and we had lunch together. The lunch was very well prepared, and it was evident that he had a liking for Iranian dishes. Maulana Azad did not take anything except a little soup. I had a good talk with him during and after lunch. He asked me many things about Iran. It was evident that he was greatly interested in Iran. He accepted all my suggestions about cultural relations between India and Iran, and ordered that they should be carried out. He also asked me to introduce to him some learned men of Iran, so that they could be nominated as members of cultural and scientific societies of India. After an hour, his car drove me back to my place.

On one of his journeys back from Europe, Maulana Azad stopped at Tehran for some days. He was the guest of the Iranian Government. During those days I came much closer to him. Every day I spent some time with him. Every time I came into contact with him, my admiration for him grew. I profited from every meeting and derived new information from the ocean of his knowledge.

Later I learnt from every Iranian who met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad that he was always enquiring about me. Such consideration is what makes and strengthens the foundations of friendship. In 1957, I again visited India at the invitation of Aligarh University. I stayed one week in Delhi. Maulana Azad had just recovered from an illness and did not yet move out of his room. Nor did he see any visitors. In spite of this, he received me. As I sat by him on his bedstead, I remembered the previous meetings. My earlier admiration for him was confirmed. We again spoke about Iran and he showed the same interest in my country as before.

In February, 1958, in Aligarh, on the first page of the daily *Statesman*, my eyes suddenly caught a piece of very



sad news. Maulana Azad had had a stroke. This news had a strange and terrifying effect all over India. For three days, all the newspapers published detailed news about him. At last, on 22 February, 1958, this great man departed from this world. His funeral and burial ceremonies were observed near Jama Masjid. It was one of the most impressive funerals since India became free.

All sections of the people joined in honouring him as a great man. They honoured him, not so much because he had been Minister of Education in India for eleven years continuously since the first day of Independence, but because he was one of the greatest and most famous politicians of this country of thirty-eight crores of people and a man who was learned, self-sacrificing and simple. Well versed in Islamic studies and the literature of Persian and Arabic languages, he was one of the greatest men of Asia and perhaps the most learned man in the Islamic world. He was a philosopher in the real sense of the term.

In my life I have met many learned men in the East, the West, the North and the South. I have met them in Asia, Europe and Africa. I had the opportunity of knowing many of them intimately. I am conscious of how I have benefited by my contacts with them. I would unhesitatingly give Maulana Abul Kalam Azad a high rank among the greatest scholars of the world. He was a man whose name will shine brightly across the centuries. It is my feeling that very few have been his equal and perhaps none his superior.

## *A Personal Testament*

IT WAS in 1936 that I first met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. I did not, however, feel a stranger even at the first meeting. Like thousands of others of my generation, I also had seen and heard him in many public meetings and knew of his great services to the national cause. He had already become a legendary figure and people referred to him with a touch of reverence and almost awe. He was then not yet fifty but was already regarded as one of the elder statesmen of India. This was due as much to his dignity and reserve as his great reputation for judgment and wisdom. I shall never forget Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's remark, 'Do not talk of Maulana's age. He was fifty the day he was born'.

Maulana Azad had, in fact, attracted notice while he was still in his 'teens. He had a remarkable career as a student and completed the traditional routine of oriental studies by the time he was sixteen, as against the normal age of twenty or more for even the abler students. Contrary to popular belief, he did not go abroad for his studies, but was educated in Calcutta and that too : ostly at home. He went out of India only after he had finished his studies and it was during his tour of centres of Islamic studies that he also paid a fleeting visit to the Al Azhar University at Cairo.

His reputation as a precocious scholar is revealed in more than one story. He had carried on a lengthy controversy by correspondence with a well-known maulavi. The debate proved inconclusive and the scholar invited Maulana Azad to come for a personal discussion. When the youthful Maulana arrived, the old maulavi politely

enquired why his father had sent him instead of coming himself. There is also the story of a meeting in Lahore where he was invited as the chief guest of the day, but was refused entrance as no one believed that a callow youth could be the well-known savant for whom everyone was waiting!

Soon after returning from his tour abroad, Maulana Azad threw himself into the political movement. He had been attracted to politics even earlier but his contacts with political leaders in Moslem countries made him realize more keenly the need for a reorientation of Moslem politics in India. Ever since the abortive Indian revolt of 1857, Indian Musalmans had been living in an atmosphere of despondency and lack of faith. Sir Syed Ahmed tried to restore the falling fortunes of the community by a dual policy. On the one hand, he courted the favour of the ruling powers, and on the other sought to keep the community away from the field of active politics. This negative aspect of his policy was bad in itself, and became a source of danger to the community and the country because of the circumstances of the day. The attempt to keep Moslems away from politics was in sharp contrast to the rising consciousness of nationalism among the Hindus and was bound to become a source of friction and misunderstanding in course of time.

Whatever may have been the justification for the policy enunciated by Sir Syed Ahmed during the last century, it had become outmoded by the time Maulana Azad appeared on the scene. He realized that the interests of Indian Moslems could be served only if they took part in the national struggle for independence. Not only so, but Maulana Azad also saw that the liberation of India was necessary for the progress and prosperity of the entire Moslem world. He, therefore, challenged the basic tenets of what had come to be known as the Aligarh Party. He repudiated the policy of co-operation with the British and separation from the Hindus laid by Sir Syed

Ahmed and urged the Moslems of India to identify themselves with the national movement and oppose the forces of British imperialism.

It is interesting to note that though Maulana Azad was in this way a rebel against the political teachings of Sir Syed Ahmed, it was Sir Syed Ahmed's social and religious writings that first inspired him to think in terms of reform and change. A study of Sir Syed Ahmed's writings convinced him that no community can flourish in the modern world unless it responds to the challenge of the new age. Sir Syed's writings also made him realize that education in the modern world cannot be complete without first-hand acquaintance with the philosophical thought, political ideas and scientific knowledge of the Western world. This realization was responsible for Maulana Azad's efforts to learn English by himself. Sir Syed Ahmed may also have been responsible for provoking in the youthful Maulana Azad a spirit of rebellion against current Moslem dogmatism and orthodoxy. Maulana Azad shared Sir Syed Ahmed's views about the need for educational reform and social change. One may say that he carried further forward the process of reform initiated by Sir Syed. Sir Syed was content to recommend changes in education, religion and society; Maulana Azad felt that similar changes must also take place in the political outlook of the community.

Maulana Azad proclaimed his political credo in *Al-Hilal*, which first appeared in 1912. The publication of this paper literally took Moslem India by storm. As a mere literary effort, it was something unique in the history of Urdu language and literature. Rarely has there been such a combination of rhetoric and eloquence, of wit and poetry, of biting sarcasm and lofty idealism. A new style in Urdu prose grew out of the models supplied in the editorials of *Al-Hilal*. All these moved the Moslem intelligentsia, but what captured the imagination of young men was not only poetic grace or literary excellence

but the formulation and statement of a new faith. *Al-Hilal* soon became the focus where the resurgent spirit of Indian Moslems found its finest expression.

For almost fifty years, Maulana Azad stood as the champion of nationalism and progress, freedom and democracy. To some this has seemed a paradox. Maulana Azad was descended from a family of religious divines and his upbringing and training had been strictly orthodox. He became a recognized scholar in theology and Islamic lore while he was yet a young man. It was only under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmed that he started reading English after he had already completed his formal education in traditional learning. Many therefore find his role as a reformer and patriot somewhat surprising. And yet there is nothing strange in this. It seems surprising only to those who have forgotten the traditions of early Islam with its emphasis on democracy, freedom and rationalism. It was because Maulana Azad had direct knowledge of these values that he reacted so strongly against the servile politics, the feudal class divisions and the intellectual ossification of the Indo-Mohammedan society of the day. It is also worth noting that many of his close associates in the political struggle have been men trained in the traditional lore of Islam. For Maulana Azad, Islam meant freedom from political bondage, economic exploitation and intellectual obscurantism. It was the emphasis on freedom in all its aspects which dragged him from the cloister of the recluse into the battleground of politics.

The two qualities of his mind which impressed me the very first time I met Maulana Azad were the great clarity of his thought and the balance and sobriety of his judgment. He went to the heart of a problem and was able to ignore all irrelevant and extraneous issues. This capacity to pick out the essentials was derived from his scrupulous sense of justice and fair play. He never took a one-sided view of any matter and was always

willing to make allowances for those who differed from him. His like or dislike of a person rarely, if ever, swayed his judgment. His intellectual detachment and his ability to take into consideration various points of view gave a peculiar weight to whatever he said. Whenever we brought a problem to him, he was able to suggest a solution that was obvious once he had formulated it, but which had somehow not occurred to anyone before.

This power of dispassionate judgment was perhaps due to the fact that the politician was never able to submerge the scholar in Maulana Azad. The scholar is concerned with the permanent values of life, unlike the politician who usually concentrates on the events of the day. Maulana Azad was always more of a statesman than a diplomat or political tactician. He had a poet's sensitiveness but did not allow his emotions to dominate his political decisions. He tried to assess every situation with an objectivity and detachment that was surprising to friend and foe alike.

The clarity of Maulana Azad's vision was derived from the balance and sobriety of his judgment. So long as a man is rational, and judges things in the light of reason, he cannot err. Mistakes in politics as elsewhere occur only when prejudices sway the balance and prevent us from weighing the different elements in the situation before us. His sobriety and clarity of judgment gave Maulana Azad's political decisions a kind of impersonality which awed friends and disconcerted opponents. This also explains why the bitterest controversies did not evoke from him one word of anger, indignation or indictment against those who took every opportunity of trying to insult and humiliate him. In the midst of storm and conflict he remained unperturbed. This discipline developed in him a tremendous personality whose power was felt by everyone who came into contact with him.

It was during the session of the Ramgarh Congress that I had my first close contact with Maulana Azad.

On the eve of the Congress, he invited me to come as his guest. I was completely taken aback by this kindness as I was then a comparative stranger to him, but soon I had fresh evidence of his magnanimous and generous spirit. I will never forget the two or three days I spent in his camp. During breakfast, lunch and dinner, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and others often joined Maulana Azad. The conversation was not restricted to politics but ranged over the whole field of human history and culture. It was a pleasure to listen to their scintillating talk and I was struck again and again by the rational and modern outlook with which Maulana Azad approached all questions. He was an ardent nationalist but what was still more important, he was a humanist in the truest sense of the term. In the midst of controversy, he retained the detachment of a scholar and exhibited a toleration that was remarkable. Subhas Chandra Bose was then holding the Anti-Compromise Conferences as a challenge to the Congress and most Congressmen were bitter about it. Not so Maulana Azad. He did not say one hard word against Subhas Chandra Bose or the Anti-Compromise Conference. He made it clear that while he disagreed with Subhas Chandra Bose's approach and tactics, he could never forget that Subhas Chandra Bose was a true and patriotic son of India.

Maulana Azad showed the same spirit of toleration and magnanimity in his dealings with the Muslim League and its leaders. They abused him in season and out of season but Maulana Azad was always courteous in his references to them. His nationalist faith was firm and he opposed the League's policies but he never attacked any of its leading personalities. As for the students and other young men misled by the Muslim League, Maulana Azad refused to condemn or punish them, for he said that they were less to blame than the leaders who led them astray. It was an instance of poetic

justice that many of these men later came to Maulana Azad for advice and help, and needless to say, Maulana Azad always treated them with consideration and sympathy.

The question of popularity or unpopularity never weighed with Maulana Azad. He said and did what he considered to be right and stood fast by his own convictions. The way in which he resisted the blandishments as well as the threats of the Muslim League is well known. For many years, he had led the Eid prayers in Calcutta and thousands came to listen to his *khutba*. In the late 'thirties, a section of the Muslim League started an agitation for removing him from the Imamatus. Thousands of Maulana Azad's admirers resented this and pleaded with him that he should not yield to the pressure of a small misguided coterie. The more sober among the adherents of the Muslim League were themselves ashamed at the move and requested him that he should continue to lead the prayers. A large body of Moslems went to the extent of suggesting that if need be, there could be two congregations — one led by Maulana Azad and the other by some nominee of the Muslim League. Maulana Azad declared in categorical terms that political differences should not be brought into religious functions and he would not agree to conduct the prayers if this was resented by even a handful among the Musalmans of Calcutta.

Soon after the Ramgarh Congress, Maulana Azad was arrested along with other Congress leaders. He was released for a short spell after Japan's entry into the war, but all Congress leaders were again imprisoned as a sequel to the Quit India Resolution adopted by the Congress in August 1942. It is worth remembering that Maulana Azad had throughout this period worked for an understanding with the British. He sought a basis on which India could co-operate with the democracies on terms of equal partnership. He declared more than once that India's place was in the democratic camp, but it



was British intransigence which prevented India from playing her rightful role. How could India, he said, be expected to fight for freedom and democracy for others when freedom and democracy was denied to her?

This was the last occasion that Maulana Azad was destined to court imprisonment. When in 1945 he came out, I went to see him with hundreds of his admirers. In a few days, he was going to Simla to take part in the Round Table Conference convened by Lord Wavell to discuss the problem of Indo-British relations. He had been in prison since 1942 and his health was still weak. He asked me to see him at his home and when I did so, he did me the honour of asking me to join his inner circle. He told me that he had read in the Ahmednagar Fort Jail my Maharaja Sayaji Rao Lectures about the unity of Indian culture — later enlarged and published as *The Indian Heritage* — and largely agreed with the interpretation I had attempted there. He then asked me if I would help him by acting as his Secretary during the Simla Conference. I readily agreed and thus began an association which lasted till the day of his death.

I had the good fortune of seeing Maulana Azad's work not only during the Simla Conference but also during the negotiations with the British Cabinet Mission led by Lord Pethick-Lawrence. Never was the quality of Maulana Azad's intellect more clearly seen than during these discussions. In his autobiography, he has expressed his great admiration for Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. According to Maulana Azad, Deshbandhu Das combined in him the vision of an idealist and the strong common-sense of a practical administrator. In Maulana Azad's words, Deshbandhu Das knew how to reconcile what was desirable with what was possible. The same quality was evident in Maulana Azad's approach to many of the problems which had till then bedevilled the relations between Britain and India. He steered a clear course between the two extremes of impossible demands and

complete surrender. His capacity to find solutions that would satisfy rival groups and reconcile their differences had been exhibited many times during his presidency of the Congress. The same ability was seen in an even clearer light during the discussions with the British Cabinet Mission.

Maulana Azad was able to reconcile rival points of view only because he approached all problems in a scientific and critical spirit. In fact, I found his approach on most issues more rational and modern than that of many who have received modern education. Maulana Azad had never studied English during his student days. He learnt it through his own efforts, and while he acquired enough competence to read books on any subject, he never felt at home in the English language. He had no pretensions in the matter and frankly told Mr. Attlee during his visit to London that this was the reason he spoke to him through an interpreter. It is significant that with this background, Maulana Azad was yet one of the strongest advocates of the study of English in modern India. He recognized that English was for Indians the easiest source of modern scientific knowledge and contacts with modern political and social developments.

It is often said that the law of compensation is the law of life. We express the same truth by saying that Providence distributes its gifts to different persons in diverse measures. To some it gives physical strength and to others intellectual eminence. To some it gives affluence and to others fame and recognition. It is rarely that all these gifts are showered upon the same individual. Maulana Azad was one of the fortunate few to whom Providence gave in full measure all the things which human beings desire, and yet with a contrariety which is beyond human understanding, combined all these gifts with a sensitiveness and sympathy for human suffering which turned his personal achievements into an agony at the sight of

so much folly, so much futility and so much hatred all around.

With so many gifts and such sensitiveness, it was inevitable that a man like Maulana Azad was lonely in spirit. No one who came near him failed to notice the solitariness of his spirit. Courteous, kindly and a man of infinite charm, he yet breathed an atmosphere of reserve which few could penetrate. He lived in his own world of thought, and out of his musings derived the strength to endure the giant agony of the world. With all his exquisite sense of human suffering, there was in him a courage of endurance and an optimism about the essential goodness of man which sustained him in the midst of all his sufferings. Essentially a rationalist, he believed that God's Will will ultimately triumph. This was his faith and this is his testament to the people whom he loved and served so well.

## *The Revolutionary Maulana*

THE LIFE of the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad marks a movement, resistless and logical, but with some inevitable turnings, from the Moslem scholasticism of the Middle Ages (quite untouched by modern science and philosophy) to the secular State of the Indian Union and the way of life it stands for.

The Maulana Sahib's father, Shaikh Mohammad Khairuddin Sahib, had migrated to Mecca and the Maulana Sahib was born in November 1888 in the Darus Salam quarter of the Holy City. His father was a scholar of eminence and also a mystic with a considerable following in India. But he was a conservative and hated all non-traditional interpretations of Islam, which he dubbed *Wahabism*. The Maulana was educated under his father's stern control. When Maulana Sahib was about ten years old, his father was invited back to India by his large number of disciples in this country and lived mostly at Calcutta. Even before his father's death in 1909, the Maulana Sahib had burst through the medieval shell within which he had been brought up, and came under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's writings. This phase did not last long. Sir Syed had ruthlessly attacked the Moslem religious scholars or *ulema* on account of their categories of medieval thought and their medieval ways of life. With all this the Maulana agreed. But loyalty to the foreign British power was also an integral part of Sir Syed's teachings and the Aligarh Movement, and the Maulana's revolt against a policy of political subservience was inevitable. There followed,

so the Maulana Sahib insists on telling us, a phase of atheism or unbelief in his inner life. The term atheism (*ilhad*) used by the Maulana Sahib is perhaps too positive. Still it is impossible to deny that he passed through an acute, though short-lived, period of tension during which his old ideas were completely shaken and he adopted that progressive attitude which distinguished him to the end of his life.

In 1912, Maulana Sahib, who had plenty of previous experience in journalism, started with three definite aims his Urdu weekly, the *Al-Hilal*, which ultimately reached a circulation of 25,000. He challenged the traditional or *taqlidi* interpretation of Islam, and also Sir Syed's doctrine of political subservience. Simultaneously he attempted his own interpretation or *ijtihad* of Islam, which he later on explained in greater detail in his commentary of the Sacred Book, the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*.

A man who chalks out such a path must be prepared for the sacrifices entailed. Maulana Sahib was certainly prepared for all consequences. 'There are contingencies in the lives of nations,' he wrote in the *Al-Hilal* in 1913, 'when the will to live on the part of the individual becomes a positive sin and he can commit no greater crime than continuing to exist. . . But also during these contingencies the seed of self-sacrifice and self-annihilation bears the fruit of eternal life with the advent of the spring.'<sup>1</sup> And again: 'It is due to the indolence of individuals that the souls of nations sleep.'<sup>2</sup>

When the guarantee of the *Al-Hilal* was confiscated, he started the *Al-Balagh*. But the Bengal Government expelled him in 1916; all other Governments, except those of Bombay and Bihar, refused to admit him; and he settled at Ranchi, where he was soon interned by Government order. To this period of his life belong two

<sup>1</sup> Qazi Abdul Ghaffar : *Asar-i Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

remarkable works, the *Tadhkirah* and the first text of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*.

Maulana Sahib has been attacked by the orthodox on two counts. First, he was a *ghair-muqallid* or non-traditionalist, for he challenged the accepted modes of Islamic thought, which had been twisted to justify Indo-Moslem customs. This charge the Maulana repeatedly admitted. 'Whatever my circumstances of life, I have always disliked defects and imperfections. Consequently, I have always hated tradition (*taqlid*). I have never tried to find the footpath of another but have sought out a path for myself and left my footprints for those who come. Owing to Divine Kindness there are many ways for man; the easiest and the safest of them is to search for a guide. But I wish to make it quite clear that in all my spiritual distresses I have not been obliged to anyone's guidance. . . I am under no obligation for guidance to any man's hand or tongue, nor to my family nor to any syllabus of education. All the guidance I have received has been from the Divine Throne.'<sup>1</sup> And again: 'The greatest obstacles to the progress of the human mind are its traditional beliefs; no other power can bind it in such firm fetters. Also it does not wish to break these chains but preserves them as if they were jewels. Every belief, every habit, and every point of view coming from family tradition or early education, is regarded as a sacred inheritance, which it will guard with care but will never dare to touch. Very often the hold of traditional beliefs is so great that even education and environment cannot weaken it.'<sup>2</sup>

The second charge against Maulana Sahib was that in spite of being a Musalman, he believed in 'the truth of all creeds.' The charge is correct but it was often made with malice. The Quran is very definite about one matter. God has sent Divine Guidance for all people for

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Asar-i Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

it says: 'We do not punish a people till We have sent them a prophet.' The basic attribute of God is His *Rabubiyat*, which Maulana Sahib interprets to mean 'creation *plus* preservation *plus* promotion *plus* guidance.' Now at this stage of his life Maulana Sahib was very angry with Moslem theologians for interpreting the Quran according to Greek philosophy and science with inevitable misunderstandings. The Quran, he claimed, should be understood as the Prophet and the Companions understood it. They considered themselves to be the true heirs of all preceding prophets. 'We do not find difference in any of the Prophets', the Quran declares. But in all such matters Maulana Sahib is the best exponent of his own ideas.

In writing to a correspondent, Maulana Sahib stated in the *Al-Hilal*: 'You must always keep in view the difference between a religion and the followers of that religion; they are two different things and must be kept apart. Two-thirds of our disappointments are due to the fact that we forget this basic difference. *We cannot take a single step towards the truth by starting from those ideas and beliefs, which are actually found in the minds of the followers of any inculcated religion.* . . . Nevertheless ~~there~~ cannot be more than one path of truth. There were (seemingly) only two alternatives for the Quran; it could either affirm the correctness of the followers of all religions or condemn them all. It could not affirm the correctness of the followers of all religions for they were opposed to each other; similarly, it could not condemn all religions, for this would have meant declaring that the world had been always devoid of religious truths and the foundations of man's spiritual culture and improvement would have been overthrown. So the Quran chose a third path and declared: "All the religions of the world are correct, but their followers have deviated from the truth. All ignorance, opposition, differences of claims and conflicts of organizations, which we now find, are due to lack of

intelligence and defective actions of the followers of religions; in the teachings of religions there is no difference whatsoever." If these differences between the followers of religions, which are not based upon truth, could be removed, then that which is true would be left with every religious group. . . This is that "unity in Truth" (*mushtarik haq*), the spiritual content of which is found in all the religions of the world.<sup>1</sup>

And for another correspondent he wrote in the *Al-Hilal*: 'The difficulties you find in reflecting upon the Quran will not be removed till certain matters are clarified. . . Briefly, you may understand it like this. After the first generation of Islam, Moslem thought followed two different paths, the Quranic and the un-Quranic. . . By un-Quranic are to be understood all those ways which are based not on the Quran but on the thoughts and emotions of its commentators; this was the inevitable result of the absorption of Greek thought, contact with Iranian, Byzantine and Indian civilizations, and the commixture of Arab and non-Arab races. Every group of commentators interpreted the meaning of the Quran according to the forms and categories of its own invention. And slowly the Quranic terms, method of instruction, arguments, demonstrations, advice and orders came to have quite a different meaning from what had been intended. The teachings of the Quran are based entirely on nature (*firat*) and its simplicity. But learning and the arts are based entirely upon man's inventiveness (*wazi'at*), which in turn depends upon his efforts. As a result, while the devotion to inventiveness increased among the Musalmans, the capacity for natural emotion and understanding decreased. Ultimately a time came when the minds of men became so habituated to discussions on the basis of the categories of their own invention that they could see nothing great or important in its

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Asar-i Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 124-25.



simple and natural shape. . . All matters were discussed entirely on the basis of the canons of sciences (*'ulum*) universally accepted at the time; but these canons cannot be absolutely true and the knowledge of various generations is not united in acknowledging their validity to the same degree. It is quite possible that a proposition accepted as absolutely true yesterday may become a matter of laughter today. The basis of religion cannot be laid upon such changing and inconstant foundations.<sup>1</sup>

And elsewhere: 'What a pity that the Quran wished to take us in one direction, but the world put it on its head and carried it to a different goal. Our Quranic commentators and religious controversialists were so lost in the *Logic* of Aristotle and the learning of the Greeks that they had no consciousness of any other path.'<sup>2</sup>

And again: 'One of the greatest causes of the differences and conflicts in this world is the unity of truth and the varieties of names and terms. Truth is one and the same everywhere, but it has various dresses. And our misfortune is that the world worships "terms" and not their meaning. Thus though all may worship the same truth, they will quarrel on account of differences of terms. One calls it *shahd* (honey) and the other calls it *asl* (honey), but there is no one to tell them that they mean the same thing. And the same factor is in operation from the great differences of religions to minor differences in customs and ways of life. If all the curtains due to external forms and terminologies could be removed and Reality were to appear before us unveiled, all the (religious) differences of this world would suddenly vanish and all quarrelsome people would see that their object was the same, though it had different names.'<sup>3</sup>

And again: 'One type of religion is hereditary; continue to believe in what your father and grand-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 125-126.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Address to the Bengal Khilafat Conference, 1920.

father believed. Another type of religion is geographical; a certain path has been chalked out for a part of this earth; everybody walks on that path and you walk on it also. Another type of religion is based on the census; the census-papers have a column for religion; get "Islam" written in that column. Another variety of religion is based on customs; a framework of religious rites and customs has been formed; follow them and do not infringe them in any way. But after eliminating all these items, something really religious is left; let us for the sake of distinction and honour call it "the true religion". It is the way to this religion that has been lost. On reaching this stage, the truth is revealed that the conflict of religions is not due to religion itself but to the evil deeds, worship of external forms and the theological canons of the claimants to religion. True religions may walk by different paths but they will reach the same goal.<sup>1</sup>

As to the difference between religion and science Maulana Sahib stated: 'Philosophy can open the door of doubt, but will not be able to close it again. Science can give proofs, but cannot provide faith. Religion can give faith, but cannot give proofs. For our life here below we require demonstrated truths, but faith is also necessary. We are unable to remain content with things that we have proved; we also want something which we cannot prove but which we believe in.'<sup>2</sup>

Maulana Sahib took up two very definite positions at this time: *that the Quran was to be understood in a natural way as the Prophet and the Companions had understood it, and that for this purpose the commentaries interpreting the Quran in terms of medieval categories of thought had to be completely discarded.* In the Introduction to the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, planned during the Ranchi period but not published till 1931, he affirms this with remarkable vigour:

<sup>1</sup> *Asar-i Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Asar-i Abul Kalam Azad*.

‘The Quran in its framework (*wa‘z*), its principles, its manner of speech and its ways of demonstration — in fact in everything — is quite independent of all artificial and man-made canons. This is as it should be. The Quran in everything has a natural method, unsullied by artificialities. This is the basic distinction which elevates the teachings of the Prophets above the artificial ways of secular learning and science. When the Quran came, the group of Musalmans to whom it was addressed were accustomed to this type of speech. They were able to think in the simple terms of nature and life’s experience (*fīrat*) for their minds had not been framed according to the artificial canons of civilization.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence they understood the Quran exactly as was intended. When the Companions heard any verse of the Quran for the first time, they immediately understood its meaning. . .

‘When the question about the meaning of a book is raised, preference will naturally be given to the interpretation of those persons who have learnt it from the person responsible for that book. The Quran was revealed to the Prophet gradually in the course of twenty-three years. As verses after verses were revealed, the Companions of the Prophet heard them, recited them in their prayers and, if they wanted to ask anything, they inquired of the Prophet. Some Companions of the Prophet came to be distinguished for their comprehension of the Quran and the Prophet himself has affirmed this. On the basis of natural

<sup>1</sup> This is true, but in view of the character and maturity of the Arabic language (*See T. Q. Vol. II, p. 487*), the Maulana Sahib discards the theory of the commentators about ‘a quickly developed language’ and insists that the Arabic language had a long history beginning from prehistoric times and was the vehicle of mature thought. The basic difference is that the categories of Greek thought could never get rid of their governing class content and the categories of the Arabic language even before the advent of the Arabian Prophet were completely free from this taint.

reason — and not merely on the basis of “good faith” — the way in which these Companions interpreted the Quran should have been preferred to the interpretation of later ages. But this unfortunately was not done. Later generations, in accordance with the mental thought of their own days, undertook new endeavours in interpreting the Quran and went clearly against the interpretations of the first generation in every matter. It was declared that “the first generations were stronger in faith but the later generations were more eminent in knowledge”. As a result the truth came to be veiled more and more with the passage of time and in many matters the simplest things were so confused that clarification became impossible. . .

‘The first period of Quranic interpretation belongs to the time when Islamic religious learning was not organized or written. The second period began with the organization of learning and the writing of books. . . We find that even with the beginning of the new generation, this (artificial) garb was being manufactured for the Quran, but its final stage came with the development of Moslem philosophy and learning. It was during this period that Imam Fakhruddin Razi (1150-1210) wrote his *Commentary* on the Quran and tried his best to veil the soul of the Quran in this artificially-manufactured garb. If the Imam Sahib had realized this truth, at least two-thirds of his *Commentary*, if not the whole of it, would have become useless. . .

‘This error was not confined to the Quranic method of demonstration but spread to every part of it. The controversies of logic and philosophy demanded various types of new terminologies and Arabic words were used to indicate these new terms. It is obvious that the Quran is not based on the philosophy of the Greeks nor was the Arabic language acquainted with Greek terms when the Quran was revealed.

Consequently whenever these words are used in the Quran, their meaning could not have been the same as was given to them after the manufacture of the new terminology. Nevertheless, the new meanings were attached to these words in the interpretation of the Quran and many irrelevant controversies were started like those appertaining to the first eternity (*qadam*), the phenomenal (*hudus*), the second eternity (*khulud*), unity (*ahdīyat*), resemblance to God (*masliyat*), etc. Meanings were given to these terms which no hearer of the Quran could have dreamt of in the first generation. Another fruit of the same tree is the postulate that the Quran must keep company with new investigations. Every attempt was made to interpret the Quran in terms of Ptolemy's astronomy, just as in modern times men lost to reason try to impose the postulates of present-day science on the Quran. . .

'The basic thought of every generation inevitably affects all its knowledge and learning, including its commentaries and interpretations of the Quran. It will always be a matter of pride for Islam that its righteous scholars (*ulema-i-haq*) never succumbed to political pressure and never allowed it to affect the Islamic faith. But the influence of an age does not come through political pressure alone; it has many other avenues for exercising psychological influences on the human soul. The articles of the faith and its religious acts could be protected from these contemporary political influences and our righteous scholars have protected them. But it was impossible to prevent the human mind from being permeated by contemporary thoughts and attitudes, and it has not been protected from them.

'During the fourth century of the Hijri era, the period of *ijtihad* (new interpretation) came to an end in the sphere of Moslem learning. Thereafter, it is rare to find any scholar leaving the beaten path of

tradition (*taqlid*). This disease permeated the Quranic commentaries also. Anyone who wanted to write a Quranic commentary first selected a leader to follow, and then walked blindly behind him. If a commentator of the third century of the Hijra made a mistake, it was repeated by all commentators till the 9th century. No one considered it necessary to part from tradition even for a few moments in order to investigate the real situation. Ultimately, Quranic scholars became so spineless that they could not think of anything beyond writing marginal notes on current commentaries. You have only to examine these marginal notes on the *Baizawi* and *Jalalain* to find out the labour that has been wasted on merely white-washing an old building . . . Also if you take up any current Quranic commentary, you will find opinions of various commentators quoted, but preference will always be given to the weakest and the most inappropriate opinions; and the best opinions, though quoted, will be completely discarded.<sup>1</sup>

This judgment, though severe, is substantially correct. Moslem religious thought, after a very great twist had been given to it, became more or less stationary. Alberuni, writing in the time of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, made a declaration similar to Maulana Sahib's: with reference to Moslem science and said that any further scientific progress was impossible.

The causes for their stoppage of thinking—or closing of the door of *ijtihad*, as Maulana Sahib puts it—deserve a careful examination. At the time of the death of the Omayyad Caliph, Walid bin Abdul Malik (714 A.D.), Islam had expanded up to Spain on the one side and the frontiers of China on the other. It cannot be denied that the establishment of a unified system

<sup>1</sup> The *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, Introduction, pp 66-70.

of administration was economically and materially a definite gain to the governed, and this is the primary reason for the succession of a series of mammoth Empires — the Omayyad, the Abbaside, the Ghaznavide, the Seljuq, the Khwarazmian, the Mongol, the Taimurid — till about the 16th century, when national movements appeared both in Europe and Asia. When one imperial dynasty fell owing to its incompetence, public opinion desired the establishment of a new imperial dynasty to take its place. A centralized empire could see to the safety of trade routes, which covered a journey of three or four months. Most regions in this area produced only a very limited number of commodities and were dependent upon trade for the bare necessities of life. Islam had given to the whole region Arabic for its cultural language and the Moslem *shari'at* gave it the best system of private law that was possible for the Middle Ages. The great and small cities, which were the centres of Islamic life and culture, depended upon the security of roads for even their daily supply of food, for they were often very far from the grain-producing provinces. Many medieval legists were of opinion that 'the glory of Islam' was a matter for the cities only.

Amir Mu'awiya laid the foundations of two political institutions — a hereditary monarchy and an official or bureaucratic governing class, all members of which were appointed and dismissed by the occupant of the throne. A third institution — that of the State-maintained and State-subsidized *ulema* or religious scholars — was also established in due course. The relation of these three institutions to each other I have discussed elsewhere. But they were not known to the Quran and yet a Quranic justification had to be found for them by a series of 'pre-determined interpretations'. These interpretations killed the expansive character of the Islamic creed. But the primary problem of the Middle Ages was 'search for security'. Our best thinkers and leaders today search

for cultural and economic security through a planned progress of the human mind as well as its material environment. Our medieval ancestors tried to find security in a static and unchanging social order. If a ruling dynasty was overthrown by a usurper, who formed a new governing class of his own, a limited number of families suffered but the normal life of the people was not affected. But it was otherwise with 'ideas' that threatened the social order. As a result of the struggle between the basic Quranic principles, the traditions of the various peoples who had joined the Islamic fold and their varying cultures and many other factors, which cannot be enumerated here, a sort of compromise was made. This compromise gave us the beaten path of *taglid* or orthodoxy (*sunnat wal jama'at*); its basic principle was that Islamic thinking in all spheres should permit nothing new or novel, as everything new was a danger to the social order.

On this principle, held subconsciously rather than consciously, science was prohibited along with magic, alchemy and the like. The 'reading' of the Quran was recommended, whether you understood its meaning or not; 'studying' the Quran for personal guidance and spiritual culture was declared to be meritorious; but 'commenting upon the Quran' by direct interpretation was considered dangerous. All authors were required to follow one of the specified schools which tradition permitted.

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Novelty lay not in the condemnation of this medieval theological religious structure, which in fact stood self-condemned, but in what Maulana Sahib tried to put in its place. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was really a progressive revolutionary and a believer in true freedom, but he is classed among the *ulema* on account of his religious learning in which he over-topped them all.



He was also a nationalist because he believed that the basis of the Quran was not theological hatred but humanity, and prescribed correct moral relations between human beings in spite of their different religions.

‘For about twenty-three years,’ Maulana Sahib declares, ‘the Quran has been the object of my contemplation day and night. I have devoted prolonged thought to every chapter, every verse, every pause and every word. And I can declare that of the existing commentaries (*tafsirs*) and other books on the Quran, whether printed or in manuscript form only, the larger part has been studied by me. I have not failed in investigating and studying any problems whatsoever which have arisen in the discussions concerning the science of the Quran.

‘The ways of learning and investigation are now-a-days divided into the old and the new. For me this distinction has no meaning. That which is old, I have acquired by inheritance, that which is new I have acquired by my own efforts. I know every inch of the old roads, and the new roads are equally well-known to me. From the very first day I have refused to be content with what my family, my education and my society gave me; I have not been bound by the fetters of tradition in any direction, and the thirst for truth has never deserted me. There is no *conviction* in my heart, which the thorns of *doubt* have failed to pierce; there is no *faith* in my soul; which has not been subjected to all the conspiracies of *disbelief*. I have quaffed draughts of poison in all sorts of cups and attempted to collect prescriptions of antidotes from every hospital. When I was thirsty, my thirst was not like the thirst of others; when my thirst was quenched, the stream from which I drank was not on the public highway. After these prolonged investigations and search for truth, I have explained the Quran to the

extent I have been able to understand it in three books: the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, the *Al-Bayan* and the Introduction to the *Tafsir*.<sup>1</sup>

Only the first two volumes of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* have been printed. They consist of an Introduction of 76 pages, a commentary on the Opening Chapter (*Surat-ul-Fatiha*) covering 174 pages, and the translation and commentary on the Quran up to the eighteenth out of the thirty equal sections into which the Quran has been divided.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the fact that it is not technically complete, there is nothing like the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* in the whole realm of Moslem religious literature.

In his carefully composed review of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, the late Maulana Sulaiman Nadvi wrote as follows. Moslem scholars have written many commentaries on the Holy Quran. Among what I have read, the best works are those of Ibn-i Taimmiyyah and Hafiz ibn-i Qayyam, and, from the viewpoint of literary excellence, the *Amsalus Sa'ir* of Abul Fath Abdul Karim of Mosal; among later writers there is no deeper scholar of the Quran than Shah Waliullah. The complete commentaries of Allama ibn-i Taimmiyyah and Hafiz ibn-i Qayyam have been lost; nevertheless all their surviving works are commentaries on the Quran. . . The fact is that Quranic commentaries are of two types. Commentaries of the first type are based entirely on the Prophet's traditions (*rawayat*) and narratives, like the

<sup>1</sup> *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>2</sup> This Opening Chapter consists of seven verses only. Maulana Sahib's commentary on these verses covers a wide variety of topics. It has been translated into English by my esteemed friend, Mr. Syed Ashfaq Husain (who had the opportunity of studying it with Maulana Sahib), under the name of *Spirit of Islam* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958). Dr. Syed Abdul Latif has also brought out a translation, *Basic Concepts of the Quran*, which was undertaken at Maulana Sahib's request and approved by him.

works of Jarir, Tabari, S'ualabi, Qarbatî, etc. The second type is based entirely on reason, like the works of Abu Muslim Naishapuri, Raghîb Isfahani, Imam Razi Naishapuri, Madarik, Baizawi, etc. But among the scholars of the past only Ibn-i Taimmiyyah and Ibn-i Qayyam have been able to write commentaries in which reason and the Prophet's tradition have been carefully combined — in which the Prophet's traditions have been correctly weighed and in which reason does not mean a slavish following of Plato and Aristotle. . .

'The author of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* is to be praised for the fact that he has understood the spirit of the times and has, in this epoch of European imperialism, courageously followed the path which Ibn-i Taimmiyyah and Ibn-i Qayyam had chalked out for resisting the Mongol conquerors. And just as they, with reference to their times, had discovered the secret that the cause of the decline of Islam was slavish subservience to Greek philosophy, similarly the author of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* has declared the present ruin of the Musalmans to be due to their mental slavery to the philosophy of ancient Greece and modern Europe. The cure he prescribes is that the Quran should be understood according to the precepts of the Prophet and the technique of these precepts and according to natural reason and philosophy . . . The author's translation is a commentative translation; so the name of *Tarjuman-al-Quran* has been given to it. It is difficult for one man to agree with another in every respect, but taken as a whole the translation is correct, agreeable, effective and dignified. The *Tarjuman-al-Quran* is a very important thing for our times; it should be carried to every house.'<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted this review partly because it is written by a really great scholar of the old, reactionary school, who deserted the Musalmans of India in their hour of

<sup>1</sup> *Abul Kalam Azad*: A series of articles on the Maulana Sahib edited by Abaullah Butt on behalf of the All-Punjab Muslim Students Federation, Qaumi Kutub Khana, Lahore, pp. 82-85.

trial, but primarily because it brings out the difference between Maulana Sahib and the most progressive *ulema* of the old type — the school of Maulana Shibli — in the most polite form. Fundamentally the review is not correct. This is not the place for discussing the Mongolian invasion, but the collapse of Alauddin Khwarazam Shah and his officers before Chengiz Khan was certainly not due to their addiction to Greek philosophy. Also, the advance of the Mongol armies was ultimately stopped by the Egyptian Berbers and Alauddin Khilji; the Moslem *ulema* bowed to Chengiz Khan and his successors and got magnificent grants. Imam Ibn-i Taimmiyyah is believed to be the founder of that school, or rather outlook of life, which in later days has come to be called *Wahabism*. He suffered bravely for his cause both at the hands of the rulers and of the vulgar Moslem herd. Maulana Sahib in his *Tadhkirah* writes page after page in praise of Ibn-i Taimmiyyah, but he neither explains his doctrines nor subscribes to them. Lastly, if the Sir Syed school erred in accepting modern science along with subservience to British imperialism, the Shibli school made an equally great error in trying to combat the achievements of modern science with theological weapons and keeping out of politics. Maulana Sahib has not committed either error. He objected to the interpretation of the Quran in terms of Greek thought, but to Greek philosophy, science, art, music, culture as a stage — and a very great stage — in human progress he had no objection whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Ghubar-i Khatir*, Letter dated 15 June, 1943, where Maulana Sahib after confessing his fondness for music—‘I can live happily without all other necessities of life but not without music, for pleasant sounds are the support of my life’—goes on to express his regret that the Musalmans learnt so little from the Greeks. ‘Arab authors knew as little of Indian drama as about Indian music. Alberuni (*Kitabul Hind*) discusses Sanskrit poetry and prosody. But he says nothing about Indian drama. In the same way, the Arabs were quite ignorant of the literature of the Greeks and knew nothing about Greek poetry and drama; they just knew the names of Homer,

Also Maulana Sahib at no stage of his career objected to the complete acceptance of European science in every field from mathematics to archaeology, because they are things of universal human value. The remarkable vigour with which he directed our Indian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research in a progressive spirit is a complete proof of this fact. How Maulana Sahib could have got anything from Ibn-i Taimmiyyah or any medieval author I completely fail to understand. For Maulana Sahib's *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, while deriving its moral and spiritual tenets from the Sacred Book moves in a world that is delightfully modern — a world in which neutrons revolve round the atomic nuclei and the Darwinian doctrine of natural selection is taken as granted. He is a scholar of world history and comparative religions, and both subjects were unknown to the Middle Ages both in the East and the West.

It is generally believed that the Opening Chapter is a summary of the whole Quran. In his commentary on this Opening Chapter of seven lines, Maulana Sahib gives an account of the basic principles of the Quran.

Sophocles, etc. because they had come across them in the works of Aristotle and in Plato's *Republic*, but their knowledge did not extend beyond this. The definitions of "tragedy" and "comedy" by Ibn-i Rushd (Averroes) in his commentary shows how ignorant he was of these matters, for he defines "comedy" as eulogy (*madh*, praise) and "tragedy" as "satire" (*hajn*, condemnation). It is not clear as to how far the Arabs were influenced by Greek eloquence; it seems that they never thought this subject worthy of attention. Aristotle's works and his *Poetics* had been translated into Arabic and Ibn-i Rushd has included them in his commentaries. But Arab scholars were incapable of understanding the spirit of Greek literature and they were too busy in investigating Arabic eloquence to pay any attention to it. Aristotle's two treatises on the subject are based on models of Greek eloquence and poetry, which were unknown to the Arabs' (pp. 316-317). It is quite unnecessary to add that the Arabs also remained completely ignorant of Greek achievements in the sphere of architecture and sculpture and of other fine arts. The point is that Maulana Sahib, instead of objecting to the study of Greek civilization by the Arabs, regretted that their study of it had been confined to a few aspects of it only.

Nothing like it has ever been written, but since two excellent English translations of it by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif and Mr. Ashfaq Husain are available, I will confine myself to the main points.

Maulana Sahib's thesis about the 'unity of religions' may be defined as follows: (1) Belief in the existence of God is found in all creeds; it is the common inheritance of mankind. 'The worship of God is ingrained in the nature of man.' All religions teach the same truth. (2) The differences between religious groups are, therefore, only found in three things: (a) the varying insistence laid on the attributes of God, (b) differences in forms of worship, and (c) differences in religious laws. These differences are due to differences in time, environment and circumstances as well as the stages of man's mental development. About the existence of God, no one has anything new to say; the messages of the Prophets on this point are merely repetitions; also the nature of God is totally beyond human comprehension.<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Sahib quotes Sir Oliver Lodge: 'From the motion of the electrons round the positively charged nucleus of an atom to the motion of the planets round the sun, and so forth, everything points to a predetermined law.' But this predetermined law for Maulana Sahib is not a mere concatenation of material causes and effects but a cosmic or moral law — or, in the terms of the Qur'an, the *Fitratul Lah*, the law of Divine Purpose. The world is Divinely guided. Before the appearance of protoplasm and of living creatures, there is a progress to higher and higher unities,<sup>2</sup> but when life first appears, we are in a position to understand the process better. Divine Guidance, for which the Quranic terms are *huda* and *wahi*, is given to the lowest of creatures through intuition and instinct (*wajdan*) — the capacity to learn from experience and to transmit the knowledge so acquired

<sup>1</sup> *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghubar-i Khatir*, Letter dated 18 October, 1942.

to their offspring. At the higher animal level, Divine Guidance is given through sense-impressions and the capacity for thinking.<sup>1</sup> To human societies, who unlike animals are required to live according to a moral law, guidance is given through prophets or messengers of God. Maulana Sahib accepts the Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest (*baqa'i anfa'*), but claims a Divine Guidance for it; without the assumption of Divine Guidance the progressive movement of organic species cannot be explained. 'The law of

<sup>1</sup> It should be clarified that Maulana Sahib here means guidance (*huda*) in the extensive sense it is intended in the Quran, but which has been ignored by the commentators. The Quran, for example, in a well-known verse says that God has sent *wahi* (inspiration) to the bee so that it may seek its house in the mountains. Other verses are also quoted by Maulana to the same effect (*T. Q.* p. 179). 'Our Lord (*Rab*) has given everything its form and nature and then guided it (*huda*)' (*Chapter 20, verse 50*); 'He who has created me and then guides me' (*Chapter 26 : 70*); 'He who has ordained and then guided (*huda*).' *Very clearly the 'wahi' of the prophets is only a developed form of the guidance (huda) given by God to all His creatures*, through their instincts, sense-impressions, reason, etc. Then referring to the following verse, which was addressed to the Quraish idolators; 'Is there any of the partners (whom you set for God) who can guide you (*yahdi*) to *haq*? God alone guides (*yahdi*) to *haq*. Then is not He who guides you to *haq* more worthy of being followed than he who cannot guide and has to be guided?' (*Chapter 10 : 35*); Maulana Sahib adds : 'This is an important principle of the Quran. Because the words guidance (*hidayat*) and truth (*haq*) have been used here, the (Arabic) Quranic commentators thought that it meant the guidance of *wahi* (God's words) and the 'truth' (*haq*) here meant the truth of religion. All Persian and Urdu commentators have followed them. As a result, the meaning of the Quranic argument has been totally lost. On reflecting at such places one is wonder-struck at the low level of the study and intelligence of the later generations, which prevented them from understanding the obvious meaning of the Quran. Since the idolators believed in God but not in the Prophet's *wahi*, the argument loses all meaning if God's 'guidance' is taken to mean the Prophet's *wahi*. . . The fact is that these writers never took the trouble of finding out the various meanings and grades of the word 'guidance' (*huda*) as it has been used in the Quran . . . However the word guidance (*huda*) here does not mean the guidance of *wahi* but the guidance of instinct, sense-impression and reason; also *haq* does not mean the 'true religion' but should be taken in its dictionary meaning as life's correct path. (*Tarjuman-al-Quran* II, p. 179).

nature's selection,' he says, 'applies to human societies in the same way as it applies to animal species. Just as nature causes useful species to survive and eliminates useless species, in the same way only those societies are preserved whose preservation is useful for the human race. The useless are weeded out. God says that this is His mercy (*rahmat*); had it been otherwise there would have been nothing to hinder oppression and disorder among mankind.'<sup>1</sup>

As is well known, the teachings of the Quran are based on a progressive conception of human history, the substance of which is given by Maulana Sahib as follows: 'The Quran says that at the beginning all men lived a natural life and were not torn asunder by strife and hatreds. They all lived in the same way and were content with their simple lives. Then, owing to an increase in population, which necessitated an increase in the means of subsistence, various differences began to appear, and these differences led to strife, contentions, cruelties and disorders. Every group began to hate other groups and the strong began to trample over the rights of the weak. Under these conditions it was necessary for the light of Divine Guidance or *wahi* to be sent to lead mankind to the path of truth and justice. So this light was vouchsafed, and a series of prophets appeared to preach the truth to mankind. By the terms prophet or *rusul*, the Quran indicates all those leaders who have provided this continuous guidance; for they brought the message of God's truth, and *rusul* means 'messenger.'<sup>2</sup> 'When we

<sup>1</sup> *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, p. 128. It is the essence of the Quranic doctrine that prophets have been sent to all peoples. In Vol. II, p. 215, where he discusses the matter in detail, Maulana Sahib refers to the following Quranic verses: 'There has been a messenger for every community, and when he comes among them, he decides matters justly and they are not oppressed' (*Yunus* : 47); 'We have sent a messenger to every community' (*Chapter* 16 : 36); 'Have We not given you news of the people of Noah, A'd, Samud and people after

[contd. overleaf]



examine man's ideas about God with reference to various stages of his life', Maulana Sahib says, 'we observe a rational movement among them. It appears that there has been an evolutionary progress in man's ideas about God along with the progress of his material conceptions. There has been a gradual movement from the lower to the higher. It is difficult for us to unearth the first chains of this evolutionary process, for as we recede towards the past, the light of history becomes dim and the revelations of the prophets have not given us any details about it.'

them, no one knows (all of them) except Allah.' (*Chapter 14 : 9*). The Quran also says : 'And indeed we have sent messengers before you ; some of them we have mentioned and others we have not mentioned.' (*40 : 78*). Only *messengers* belonging to the Semitic groups have been mentioned by the Quran.

J. C. GHOSH

## *The Educational Leader*

MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD was the Minister of Education in the Government of India from January 1947 till the last day of his life, 22 February, 1958. He died in harness; the problems which occupied his mind till the last moment of his life were those of national unity, and of education for national prosperity, for developing balanced minds and for promotion of better understanding among the people of India.

Perhaps there are few statesmen who show such depth of understanding and practical and sagacious approach to problems both in politics and in education as the Maulana did. As our Prime Minister, Shri Nehru, put it 'he was a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect'.

We are too near the period during which the Maulana presided over the educational destinies of the country, to understand the historical importance of his achievements in the field of education and national reconstruction. These eleven years have been some of the most momentous in the annals of Indian history and particularly in the history of educational development of the country. The appointment of the University Education Commission (1948) with their report of 1949; the appointment of the Secondary Education Commission (1952) with their report of 1953; the reorganization of the All-India Council for Technical Education from its inception on 30 November, 1945, to its amended form of today; the chain of laboratories of scientific research established during the period; the establishment of the Kharagpur Institute of Higher Technology; the rapid development

of the Indian Institute of Science; the establishment of the University Grants Commission with considerable financial resources — these are some of the highlights in the animated scene.

It is not too much to say that the vision and the powerful personality of the Maulana gave a unity of purpose to the efforts for the phenomenal expansion of technical education in this decade. As he said in his last speech at the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education on 6 February, 1958, only a fortnight before his demise :

‘When I assumed charge of Education in 1947, I immediately saw that there could be no solution of our educational problems without the fullest co-operation of the Centre and the Provinces. Education was no doubt a provincial subject, but it was my considered opinion that this distinction could be maintained only when our educational targets have been achieved. Till such time, the Central Government should openly recognize that though education is a State subject, it must share this responsibility with the State Governments if we are to meet the challenge of the times.’

The need of a co-ordinated effort by all concerned, was emphasized by the Maulana in all his speeches and in the directives he gave to his Ministry. There were many difficulties: lack of finance, dearth of personnel, equipment, buildings, etc. which faced the task that he set before the country, but his indomitable spirit guided us all through those difficulties. To quote him again from his last educational utterance of 6 February, 1958:

‘The progress which has been achieved in spite of these difficulties can be measured by the fact that when

I assumed charge, the Central budget for education was only about Rs. 2 crores and is today considerably more than Rs. 30 crores. It is not only the financial allocation which has been increased, but there has been expansion in all types of activities.'

At the 14th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, which was held in New Delhi on 13 and 15 January, 1948, within one year of Maulana's assuming charge of the Education portfolio, he said:

'Historically speaking, it is the fourteenth session, as thirteen have already been held. But to be more accurate, I think we should call it the inaugural session of the Board, since the first thirteen took place in the Indian Empire which on 15 August, 1947, came to an end and with it a long chapter of Indian history. Today we are assembled in a new India which has yet to make its history.'

It was at this meeting that he called upon the Prime Minister to inaugurate the session of the Board. Taking a larger view of our educational requirements, the Prime Minister said at this meeting:

'Another task before the Board is to advise the Government on implementation of the reports like the one from the Scientific Manpower Committee. For proper planning it was necessary for the Government to know what talent it had at its disposal and how it must train its men to take up essential jobs. India is not lacking in talent, scientific or otherwise, but it was not properly employed. There are so many tasks lying undone because we feel that we do not have the men for them, and yet there are men in the country who have the necessary qualifications and are not employed.'

**He further said :**

**‘ Our system of education must not be formed in isolation from our social and economic life of tomorrow. Different sides of our life and activities must be correlated. The primary aim of any system is to create balanced minds which cannot be misled. We must be strong mentally before we can think of building a nation.’**

With this high objective set by the Prime Minister and with the vision that the Maulana had for achieving great ends in the quickest time possible, the eleven years were devoted to achievements which no other period in the history of India could show. The nation had just awakened to a new sense of its destiny and the Maulana could feel its pulse as very few other men could do ; and from year to year, in his addresses to the All-India Council of Technical Education, to the Central Advisory Board of Education, to conferences of Education Ministers, meetings of the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO, and in inaugural speeches delivered at the opening of institutions, the Maulana brought to his audience with dignity, decorum and grace, a sense of urgency regarding things that must be done first, and an awareness that education was basic for the success of every sphere of planning ; that industrial progress in the country could not be achieved and sustained without planned technical education at all levels.

What the Maulana expressed at the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, 1950, will indicate the broad picture he had in mind of what needed to be done. He said :

**‘ To improve our standards of technical education, the programme that we had envisaged was the establishment of four higher technological institutes in addition**

to the strengthening of existing institutions. Considerations of finance did not permit us to start with all the four, but we thought that at least a beginning must be made. The Eastern Higher Technological Institute near Calcutta was taken in hand without even waiting for the construction of all the necessary buildings. The scheme is in progress and I hope that the next academic year will see the first batch of teachers and students working in this Institute. Simultaneously, it has been our aim to strengthen existing institutions by improving their quality and increasing their capacity.'

On 19 October, 1945, the Government of India accepted in principle the recommendation of the Sargent Report that a National Council for Technical Education be set up to stimulate and co-ordinate the provision of the facilities for technical education. The All-India Council for Technical Education came into being purely as an advisory board by a resolution of the Government on 30 November, 1945, and the late Shri N. R. Sarkar was the first Chairman of the Council. The Constitution was then amended in 1953 by Government resolution and membership enlarged to represent different interests. The ex-officio chairman, according to the revised constitution, was the Minister of Education and he addressed the Council for the first time on 8 February, 1953. He said:

'As Minister of Education, I have naturally been interested in its (the Council's) working and I am happy my association with the Council will henceforth be much closer than it has been in the past. Some of the landmarks in the history of the Council naturally come to my mind on this occasion. You are aware that it was primarily at the initiative of the Council that the Government of India decided to strengthen a number of undergraduate institutions in various parts of the country by providing grants amounting to about

one and a half crores of rupees. It was also on the recommendation of the Council that the Government accepted the proposals of the Sarkar Committee to set up four higher institutes of technology in the country. The Council is also responsible for undertaking steps to establish closer relations between industries and educational institutions by establishing different types of industrial training schemes.'

How the Maulana was interested in future development of technical education is evident from the following extract from the same speech, dated 8 February, 1953 :

'One of the most important questions requiring the attention of the Council today is the question of formulating a detailed plan to implement the recommendations of the seven-man committee as incorporated in the Five-Year Plan. General lines of development have no doubt been indicated by the Committee, but it is for you to determine the steps that should be initiated to give them a concrete shape. Facilities in technological study at the post-graduate level are inadequate and even though the two institutes at Kharagpur and Bangalore will go some way towards meeting our requirements, we still have to send a large number of students for training abroad. It must be one of the first priorities in our programme of expansion to develop these facilities within the country itself. I am sure you will agree that the highest consideration should be given to strengthening institutions which are in a position to fulfil the objectives we have in view.'

The Maulana was always keen on seeing that co-ordinated efforts in a certain direction are made by different agencies of the Government. He had said this on several occasions, but in his address to the ninth meeting

of the All-India Council for Technical Education on 30 October, 1954, he made it clearer still. He said :

‘Of late, I have seen tendencies, particularly amongst Government departments, to set up separate institutions for their staff members. Their plea is that the establishment of such training centres would lead to greater efficiency than can be obtained if training were arranged in the existing institutions. I think this matter requires further consideration, and I would request the Council to devise necessary measures to see that the special needs of the various organizations are adequately fulfilled by the existing institutions. If this requires the provision of special courses, expert staff or additional equipment etc., we should be prepared for such a step. I am sure that such arrangements would prove beneficial both to the organizations and the institutions concerned. They should help to tone up the standards at the institutions and make them alive to the needs of industry, commerce and other technical departments. A further advantage would be that the job could be done more economically in this way. This is by no means an unimportant consideration in our training programmes. Short-term refresher courses would go a long way in meeting such needs and I have no doubt the Council will direct its attention to this problem.’

In the summer of 1950, the Ministry of Education accepted the offer of a site at Hijli, Kharagpur, from the Government of Bengal for the location of the Eastern Higher Technological Institute. This site of 1,200 acres included a Collectorate building and several residential quarters erected about 30 years ago and used later as a detention camp for political prisoners. On the advent of Independence, the infamous jail was closed down. In this deserted site, an enterprising Superintending Engineer



took up his residence in July, 1950, and was joined a few months later by the Director and half a dozen key members of the teaching staff. With only a kerosene lamp to guide one, law-abiding people dared not walk about the site at nightfall. We felt that the sooner the Institute was brought into being, the quicker would disappear the gloom and insecurity which pervaded the atmosphere of the place. Construction of a Hall of Residence for 300 students was immediately taken in hand. The high double walls round the Collectorate building were pulled down and the building itself reconditioned for use as lecture rooms and drawing halls. Hangars and galvanised iron sheds from war surplus stores were erected at the site for use as workshops and laboratories. Thanks to the active co-operation of the Bengal Government, the authorities of the South-Eastern Railway, the Director-General of Supplies and Disposals and the C.P.W.D., work proceeded apace; and the Governing Body decided to seek permission of the Maulana Sahib to open the first year classes from August, 1951. When I met him with this proposal early in 1951, he thought that we were taking grave risks; but if men on the spot, knowing fully well the difficulties, were prepared to take the risk, he would give them his full support.

Two hundred students selected with great care from 3,000 applicants came to reside in Hijli in August, 1951. They came from all parts of India and represented the cream of the youth of the land. They shared with the staff the joys and privations of a pioneering venture. A corporate life developed where individual complaints about lack of amenities or lack of the most modern equipment for teaching became unthinkable.

I have known many efficient administrators but very few who could think that difficulties and obstacles were unimportant, for ultimately they could be resolved by man's indefatigable energy and spirit of co-operation. The Maulana was never lacking in these qualities and

I have no hesitation in recording this, that without his enthusiastic support, the Kharagpur Institute could not have been inaugurated in July 1951.

It was with a sense of pride that while delivering the opening address at the Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, on 18 August, 1951, the Maulana said :

‘ One of the first decisions I took on assuming charge was that we must so improve the facilities for higher technical education in the country, that we could ourselves meet most of our needs. The large number of our young men who had been going abroad for higher training could have received such training in the country itself. Indeed, I looked and still look forward to the day when the facilities for technical education in India will be of such a level that people from abroad will come to India for higher scientific and technical training.’

A man who dreams in these terms surely is a man who chalks out new pathways in educational development. The Kharagpur Institute started from scratch and within the shortest time planned for taking up 1,800 students at the undergraduate level and 600 graduates for post-graduate study and research. The vision of the Maulana about this Institute was not an unrealized dream. Quirky enough the foundation stone of the main Institute building was laid by our Prime Minister on 3 March, 1952. The first batch of successful students came out in July, 1955. We were happy that each student had three jobs in his pocket as he passed out of the Institute.

The first Convocation address was delivered by the Prime Minister in April, 1956. He was also pleased on that occasion to open formally the main building of the Institute. During the early stages of the Institute, workshops and laboratories had to be equipped with machinery and equipment salvaged from the disposal depots. They

had gradually been replaced by the new additions of equipment and machinery either purchased directly or obtained through some technical aid programme, such as those of the Colombo Plan, T.C.M., UNESCO, etc.

Today, this fully residential Institute has created around itself a township in a place which was hardly better than a wilderness a few years ago. The construction programme for residential buildings for staff as well as for students was naturally unable to keep pace with the rapid growth of the Institute. At present, there are six halls of residence : Patel Hall, Nehru Hall, Azad Hall, Bidhan Roy Hall, Rajendra Prasad Hall and Radhakrishnan Hall. Each hall has accommodation for about 300 undergraduates and post-graduates with the exception of the Bidhan Roy Hall which accommodates 100 research scholars. The springing up of a regular township round the Institute can be illustrated by the facilities provided for about 5,000 people, with a post office, a bank, co-operative stores, police outposts, a multi-purpose school, one kindergarten school and a children's park, a stadium and a gymnasium. A swimming pool is also under construction. A market-place and other municipal services are in the planning stage, but will soon be brought into existence if the tempo with which this Institute has sprung up is kept up. It was no wonder that the Maulana must have felt proud of this Institute when Parliament passed the Act of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, 1956, which was implemented as from 1 April, 1957, making the Institute an institution of national importance with powers to grant degrees, diplomas and other academic distinctions. The Act provides for the Board of Governors, Academic Councils, Finance Committee and other statutory bodies, to constitute the administrative and governing machinery with the President of the Republic of India as a Visitor of the Institute. It has made the Institute autonomous and a Board of Governors has been vested with full authority over the Institute in

all academic, administrative and financial matters. Dr. B. C. Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, is the first Chairman of this autonomous Institute.

In an Institute of such national importance, new ground has often been broken in the planning of courses of studies. The Maulana could see that the old pattern of engineering education with its exclusive emphasis on technology in the narrow sense of the term, was not enough to meet the growing demands of the present days. The new India, in particular, needed engineers equipped with a sense of national service and not those who are merely skilled technicians. With this end in view, while planning courses of study and the methods of instruction and organizing the academic life of the campus, endeavours have been made to impart fundamental scientific and technological training correlated with a broad education in humanities. The Institute not only undertakes the undergraduate and post-graduate courses laid down according to the curriculum, but also provides facilities for research work of a high calibre. A special feature of the Institute's work which has been appreciated by business executives and production engineers all over India is the organization of short-term residential study courses on special aspects of business management, industrial administration, quality control and modern methods of mass production. The Institute also provides facilities for a three-year apprenticeship course in foundry, building, machine shop, tool room, carpentry etc. Thus in one Institute one sees all types of training, from certificate for the craftsman and the wireman, for the experts in management practice and production management, to the highest awards of the degrees of Ph.D. and D.Sc. in various branches of applied arts and science and technology. When the other institutes are brought into existence, the western one in Bombay, the northern in Kanpur, and the southern in Madras, the Maulana's dream will come true in full measure.

No less significant has been the development of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, as a centre of post-graduate studies and research in technology in the post-war period. Development of Aeronautical Engineering, Internal Combustion Engineering, Metallurgy and Chemical Engineering were taken in hand in the first stage of development. This was followed by the establishment of Departments of High Voltage Engineering and Power Engineering with Prof. Thacker in charge. It was intended to give the most advanced training to Electrical Engineering graduates in the generation and transmission of electric power, both thermal and hydel. A capital expenditure of two crores of rupees for creating these facilities would not have been possible but for the sustained interest of the Maulana Sahib in this institution.

Early in 1947, the Scientific Manpower Committee was appointed by the Government of India with the late Dr. S. S. Bhatnagar as the Chairman, to assess the country's requirements for scientific and technical personnel for the period 1947-57, and to recommend the steps to be taken to meet the requirements. Recommending a five-year plan of development, the Committee suggested among other things:

- (i) introduction of specialized or post-graduate courses of study and research in certain branches of science and technology not so far catered for;
- (ii) expansion of training and research facilities in existing institutions where there is scope;
- (iii) re-organization of some of the existing polytechnics for advanced instruction;
- (iv) increasing the intake of students in the various courses of some of the existing institutions;
- (v) training of supervisory category of technical personnel in conjunction with industry;

- (vi) provision of facilities for training in production, engineering, design engineering, etc. at selected institutions on a regional basis;
- (vii) organizing post-institutional practical training on stipendiary basis.

These recommendations were implemented and the facilities for technical education were considerably expanded as will be evident from the following table :

	1947	1950	1955
<b>I — ENGINEERING STUDIES :</b>			
<i>(i) Degree Level :</i>			
No. of institutions	28	37	43
Intake	2,520	3,337	5,000
Outturn	950	1,700	3,000
<i>(ii) Diploma Level :</i>			
No. of institutions	41	61	83
Intake	3,150	5,350	8,000
Outturn	1,150	2,146	3,472
<b>II — TECHNOLOGY :</b>			
<i>(i) Degree Level :</i>			
No. of institutions	16	24	25
Intake	420	782	1,050
Outturn	320	498	700
<i>(ii) Diploma Level :</i>			
No. of institutions	20	31	36
Intake	520	553	700
Outturn	290	332	428

In the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) a provision of Rs. 57.37 crores has been made for technical education

in the State Plans and in the Plan of the Central Ministry of Education and for approved schemes of the University Grants Commission. In addition to the development of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, the Delhi Polytechnic, and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the Plan as revised from time to time envisaged the establishment of 19 engineering colleges, 71 polytechnics and 60 junior technical schools. The Western Higher Technological Institute is being set up in Bombay during the year 1958-59 and preliminary work is being done in regard to the other two institutes to be established at Madras and Kanpur. Post-graduate research in engineering and technology is also being organized at selected centres.

Originally, the target was to increase the intake capacity of technical institutions with degree and diploma courses from 6,050 and 8,700 in 1955-56 to 8,060 and 11,300 in 1960-61 respectively. Consequent on the recommendations of the Engineering Personnel Committee of the Planning Commission, the target was raised for the admission capacity from 1960-61 from 8,060 to 9,480 in the case of degree courses and from 11,300 to 15,320 in the case of diploma courses. It is expected that at the end of the Second Plan these figures will ultimately go up to about 12,000 and 20,000 respectively, if the present tempo of expansion is kept up.

From January, 1947, to January, 1958, the number of institutions and the students at the engineering colleges and polytechnics has more than doubled. The Maulana realized that any change of pace in the economic development of the country needed a corresponding expansion of technical education. The perspective planning of manpower requirements with reference to future needs and undertakings will always be a subject of abiding interest. There has to be a proper understanding between our industries, Universities and technical institutions, and a proper co-ordination established between the theory

of the schools and the practice of the craftsmen. Systems of training which are in vogue in other countries like the sandwich courses, part-time release apprentice training, training in the industries, have also been visualized and I hope that the success of these systems will be assured by the co-operation of the private industries and Government departments with educational institutions. The Maulana was aware of this problem and it is hoped that his vision, which helped us to expand technical education almost beyond recognition during the last eleven years, would be an inspiration to us for future work in this field.



## *An Unfinished Masterpiece*

IN A MOOD of reflective recollection of his trials and achievements in the field of Islamic learning, referring particularly to his *magnum opus*, the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad records :

‘The subject has engaged my mind seriously over a long period of 27 years. Every chapter of the Quran, every part of it, and indeed every verse and every word of it has obliged me to traverse innumerable valleys and to counter numerous obstacles. I may assert that I have looked into a considerable portion of the vast literature, both published and unpublished, that exists today on the subject; and there is not, I believe, any corner of the Quranic knowledge, and of all that has been written so far on the problems that it raises, which I have left unnoticed. Distinction is, no doubt, usually made between the old and the new learning. But in my search for truth, this distinction has never counted with me. The old, I have received as my heritage; and the new is as familiar to me as the old, and I have delved into both.

‘I was from the very beginning reluctant to rest on what my family traditions, my education and my social environment had offered in the making of my mind. The bonds of inherited dependence on the past could not hold me. There is hardly a single conviction in me which has not had to bear the sting of doubt, or a single belief which has not faced the test of denial. I have gulped in poison with every draught of drink brought to my lips, and have at the same time

administered to myself elixir coming forth from every quarter. Whenever I felt thirsty, my parched lips did not resemble the lips of others who were equally thirsty, and when I quenched my thirst, it was not from the same fountain as others did. Whatever I could gather in my search for the Quranic truth during this lengthy period of my life, I have tried to understand to the best of my ability, and spread over the pages of this volume.'

Such in a nutshell is the view which Maulana Azad himself held of the growth and development of his mind and of his work in the field of Islamic learning. The passage occurs in the Preface which he wrote from the district jail in Meerut in 1930 to the first volume of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* published in that year. I regard this passage as Maulana's swan song; for, the circumstances of his life thereafter, marked by a lengthy period of fierce political struggle in the cause of his country, hardly allowed him the time or the opportunity to pursue further Islamic studies of any serious importance or of striking originality. By this, I do not mean that he had ceased to let his mind dwell on the problems of Islamic life or learning after the publication of his *Tarjuman-al-Quran*. In fact, he was able to snatch fleeting moments in the midst of his heavy political pre-occupation, to revise the notes to his *Tarjuman-al-Quran* and even enlarge his prolegomena to it from the Ahmednagar Jail. Indeed, during the last three years of his life, when I had the privilege to stay with him off and on at his residence at New Delhi in connection with the rendering into English of some of his outstanding writings, I did find his mind readily responsive to issues which raised themselves for fresh consideration. Still, my view is that, so far as the written word touching Islam is concerned, the best of Maulana Azad's work was unfortunately over by 1930, when the first edition of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* appeared.

But what was it that concerned Islam which he had not handled prior to 1930? There is hardly any aspect of it on which he had not ventured to express himself. The articles which he contributed on Islamic themes to his journals, *Lisan-as-Sidq*, *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, and his addresses and pamphlets, make a prodigious list. These individual writings were prompted by the political and social upheavals in the Islamic world and in the India of his day. Although in their result they proved to be brilliant expositions of some of the fundamental attitudes of Islam as sponsored by the Quran or as suggested by the example of the Prophet, these contributions do not appear to have been linked to any set programme. They were but magnificent dashes into the realm of Islamic thought. They certainly furnish a view of the great heights to which the mind of Maulana could rise. But if one is to acquaint himself with a full view of his mind and the scope of his learning, one will necessarily have to repair to his *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, his masterpiece, wherein he applied his mind to every issue raised by the Quran, a work which in the throes of his active political life he had to plan in response to an ever growing and pressing demand from every centre of Islamic learning. The work converges all the leading rays of his creative genius and interfuses every one of these into every other to produce a veritable floodlight.

To appraise Maulana Azad's distinctive contribution to Islamic learning, one will have to take a view of his mind as it shaped itself in his infancy and boyhood. The method is warranted by the fact, so apparent in all his writings, that the attitudes developed in him in the first period of his life clung to him throughout his learned career. Experiences of life and the gradual acquisition of knowledge contained in literatures other than Islamic necessarily enabled him to spread his views on an ever-widening canvas. But the attitudes displayed therein remained essentially the same throughout.

From the *Tadhkirah* which was issued in 1919, and from his references to himself in his other writings, one may easily collect the material one needs to catch a glimpse of the formation of his mind in his early youth. Born in Mecca of a mother belonging to a renowned family of Arab scholars and of a father with an equally learned pedigree, his infant mind, under the tutelage of both his maternal grandfather and his own father, grew saturated with Islamic lore. The result was that before he had attained the age of ten, when his father had to return to India from his self-imposed exile, he had peeped into almost every book of note dealing with the religion and law of Islam. The process was intensified in the Madrasas at Calcutta to which he was introduced formally by his parents. But this intensity had its reaction. The Madrasas did not offer to the boy what he had not himself informally gathered already at Mecca. The unregulated acquisition of so much knowledge in so short a period created in his tender mind confusion and doubts touching a variety of things. This is hinted at by Maulana himself in the passage I have quoted at the head of this article.

One thing, however, was steadily making itself clear to him during this period; and it was that the Quranic word had not in the course of Moslem history been allowed by vested interests the freedom to speak for itself. He felt that unless it was rescued from its medieval bondage, and allowed the opportunity to function freely as in the time of the Prophet and his companions, the Moslems of his day all over the world would not be able to march abreast of the times, and make progress.

While this impression was shaping itself in his young mind during the days of his study in the Madrasas of Calcutta, came the opportunity to him to travel abroad in West Asian countries. His visit to Cairo synchronized with the heyday of the University of Al Azhar, from where the influence of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani and

Shaykh Muhammad Abduh had already spread abroad in favour of liberalism in Islam and emancipation of Moslem countries from European domination. So when, after his itinerary in West Asian countries, he returned to India, the one idea which seized his mind was to release Moslem religious thought from its age-long obscurantism, and to work against British imperialism in his own land. The Italian aggression in Tripoli and the war in the Balkans, which roused the Moslems of India to organize financial and medical aid for their suffering brethren in the affected countries, gave him the occasion to intensify his resolve to fight the British rule in India.

Thus it was that the Pan-Islamic tendency, developed in him in the atmosphere of Cairo, took on the form of a direct struggle against British imperialism in India, and he started *Al-Hilal*, a weekly in Urdu, from Calcutta. That was in the year 1912. The fascinatingly scholarly style of the journal and its bold approach to every problem soon caught the imagination of the Urdu-knowing public all over India, and seriously alarmed the British Government in the country.

*Al-Hilal* had two definite objectives before it. One was to fight obscurantism in the life of the Indian Moslems; the other was to fight British imperialism in India. At the time, Aligarh was a leading centre of Moslem influence. The religious side of the movement launched by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan did possess an appeal for Maulana Azad. But in so far as its political objective was concerned, he felt that it was not in consonance with its attitude in religion. He felt that liberty in religious thought did not go with subjection in politics. The Aligarh political ideal had by the year 1912 taken a concrete form in the establishment of the All-India Muslim League whose primary function at first was to seek favours at the hands of the British Government in the country. It was opposed to the methods of the Indian National Congress, whose aim at the time was to demand rights for the people — in

practice the educated among them — under the aegis of the British raj. The young Maulana held that the approach by both parties was wrong. The idea of seeking favours on the one hand, or of seeking rights on the other, was for him perpetuation of British rule in India. He felt that the retention of the British connection with the land was harmful to the country, as well as to Islam. It was therefore not possible, he thought, to reform Islamic life in India and liberate the Moslem mind from its medieval bondage, so long as the land itself was not liberated from British rule.

That was the notion which seized the mind of Maulana in 1912, several years before Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the political scene of India. His weekly journal, *Al-Hilal*, brought to the Moslems of India a new vision in the field: both of religion and of politics. When the First World War broke out and Turkey chose to align itself against Britain, *Al-Hilal* rose to its highest stature, and began to deal hard blows at British imperialism in every field of its operation. The method followed was to give a new consciousness to the Moslems of India through a fresh exposition of their religion, and thereby to prepare them to join hands with all the revolutionary forces working for freedom.

*Al-Hilal* was naturally subjected to an endless variety of vexations by the British Government in India. Undeterred by them, it went on from strength to strength, creating a new atmosphere in the country, and furnishing fresh inspiration to the Indian National Congress. Maulana Azad's literary output of the time was produced not on any set or systematized plan. Each article came out under the promptings of the moment, as occasion demanded, and covered every subject of immediate public interest. But whatever the subject dealt with, the dual purpose was always kept in view, viz., fighting British imperialism on the one hand, and Moslem medievalism on the other.

Maulana Azad's contribution in the field of Islamic thought took on a variety of forms, and covered in their totality almost all the leading problems, doctrinal, philosophic, and legal which had engaged the minds of Moslem divines throughout the course of Moslem history. In as much as they were stray articles, unrelated to any definite plan, pressure was brought to bear on him to undertake, side by side, an exposition of the entire Quran.

In response to this demand, Maulana Azad planned to execute three works which in his view were to go together. One was to prepare an explanatory translation of the Quran. The idea was to let the Quran speak for itself without any commentator coming in between the Book and the reader. The work was to satisfy the needs of the average reader. This was to be styled *Tarjuman-al-Quran*. The second work envisaged was to be entitled *Tafsir-al-Bayan*. This was meant for students interested in the details of the Quran. The third was to be called *Muqaddama-i-Tafsir*. This was to deal with the purposes of the Quran and the principles underlying them so as to meet the needs of advanced students.

The three works envisaged could not eventually be issued separately. The march of events in Maulana's public life did not permit such a consummation. What was attempted under the three heads during a lengthy period of very trying circumstances, was issued in 1930 under the title of *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, the title reserved originally for one of the three works planned, as it was comprehensive enough, in its connotation, to accommodate the features of the other two. Since this work brings within its orbit most of what Maulana had written in his numerous articles, notes, and pamphlets, and constitutes the *summum bonum* of his achievements in the realm of religious thought, a detailed reference to it is called for.

The history of the publication of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* is, in my view, the most serious chapter in the life of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. It is so, because it dovetails

into the most vexatious phase of his political career. It covers a period of nearly fifteen years, and furnishes the picture of trials which a patriot-scholar has to bear when he seeks to pursue two avocations at one and the same time ; one calling for the quietness of the cloister, and the other, the vigils and tribulations of the battle-field. The story is so telling in Maulana's own version that I have thought it appropriate to include it in this memorial volume by extensive quotations in translation. The passage is from his Preface to the first edition of his great work.

‘In the year 1916,’ writes Maulana Azad, ‘when the announcement was made in the columns of my weekly journal, *Al-Balagh*, that I proposed to prepare and publish an explanatory Urdu translation of the Quran styled *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, and a commentary of it called *Tafsir-al-Bayan*, I never dreamt that I was undertaking a task which would lie in abeyance for nearly fifteen years, keeping the public in a state of tiresome expectation and causing in me an unending sense of frustration. But such was the course of events that I had to bear.

‘Hardly had a few months passed since this announcement, when on the third of March, 1916, the Government of Bengal chose to issue, under the Defence of India Ordinance, an order for my immediate ex-<sup>1</sup>ment from Bengal. The order came in so suddenly that I had hardly the time to make the necessary arrangement for the continuation of *Al-Balagh* or the publication of the projected volumes of *Tarjuman-al-Quran* and *Tafsir-al-Bayan*.

‘Since already, under this very Defence of India Ordinance, my entry into the provinces of Delhi, the Punjab, United Provinces, and Madras had been banned, the only two provinces where I could betake myself were the provinces of Bihar and Bombay, and



I chose Ranchi in Bihar for my place of refuge. The idea was that as this place was at a convenient distance from Calcutta, I could still pursue my publishing activities from there.

‘When the project was originally conceived in 1915, I had three objectives before me. One was to prepare a translation of the Quran in Urdu, the second was to write a commentary thereon, and the third was to write an introduction to the commentary. The three pieces of work, as I thought, were to meet the needs of three distinct sets of people interested in the Quran — the translation, the needs of the average reader; the commentary, of those who cared to make a detailed study of the Quran; and the introduction, the needs of the intellectual elite, or the more advanced scholars.

‘By the time the announcement was made through *Al-Balagh* of my proposed publications, five parts of the Quran had already been translated and the commentary had covered the matter of the Quran up to the *Al-Imran* or Chapter 3 of the Quran, and the introduction had been set in the form of notes. With a view to executing the plan speedily, I had arranged that printing should proceed, side by side, with the preparation of matter for the press. The hope entertained was that the translation would not only be completed but even published by the end of a year, as also at least the first volume of the commentary. The days of the week were distributed thus: three for editing the journal, *Al-Balagh*; two for translating the Quran, and two for writing the commentary thereon.

‘When I left Calcutta on the 3rd of March, 1916, six forms of the commentary had already been printed, and the work of litho-copying of the translation had begun. My endeavour was to see that my printing press should re-open and attend to the printing of at least the commentary and the translation of the Quran. In fact, in the month of June, 1916, the necessary

arrangement was made to re-open the printing press at Calcutta.

‘But on the 8th of July, 1916, the Government of India suddenly issued an order, this time of my internment, and thus cut off every hope of my maintaining any contact with the press at Calcutta, and indeed with the external world.

‘There now remained for me only one field of activity, that of literary pursuit. The 19 clauses of the Internment Regulation could not touch me there. I, therefore, thought I should rest content with that. Indeed, although every form of liberty had been snatched away from me, I knew that here was a form of liberty which no one could take away from me — the liberty of reading and writing and preserving the result of my thought: and I veritably felt that of all the comforts that life could offer, none had, in fact, been denied to me, and that I could even live my full life in such a situation. But not three months had passed in this state, when I was called upon to face a further ordeal.

‘When the order of internment was served on me, my residence was searched and whatever papers that I had with me were seized. These papers included the manuscripts of my translation and commentary. The manuscripts of the two works probably seemed innocuous. They were returned to me after a couple of weeks. But the Government of India thought that this was a hasty step on the part of the local Government. At the time, the Intelligence Department of the Government of India was under the charge of Sir Charles Cleveland. This gentleman took an inordinate personal interest in the affair. He first went to Calcutta, and there took two weeks to conduct his investigations, and then he came down to Ranchi and made a fresh search of my residence, and carried away with him not only the manuscripts of the translation and the commentary which had been returned by the local Government,

but the manuscripts also of every other of my writings, and indeed every scrap of printed matter that lay about me.

‘When this incident took place, the translation of eight parts of the Quran had been finished, and the commentary had covered the text of the Quran up to *An-Nisa*, or Chapter 5 of the Quran. Not a scrap of my writing was left with me. Undeterred by this event, I went on as before, and took up the subsequent portion of the Quran for translation and finished it by the end of 1918. This, together with the translation of the first eight chapters which were then with the Government of India, completed the translation of the entire Quran.

‘I then opened correspondence with the Government of India for the return of my manuscripts. The reply was that neither could they be returned forthwith, nor were the Government in a position to say when these would be returned. Since, apparently, there was no early hope of their return to me and one could not say what might not happen next, I thought it better to start afresh a re-translation of the first eight parts which had been seized by the Government of India. It was by no means an easy task to write once again what had already been written and lost; it was an ordeal. Still, I faced it and finished the work. Indeed, I sent for an Urdu typewriter, and had more than half of the matter typed by the 27th of December, 1918, when the Government chose to set me free.

‘The obstacle in the way of printing and publishing my writings, no doubt, was no longer there. But the country at that hour was preparing itself for a huge political movement of non-co-operation, so much so, that the demand was pressed from all sides for the resuscitation of my old weekly, *Al-Hilal*. The demand was imperative and I had to yield. Not merely this, I had to throw myself zealously into the activities of the new movement.

‘Notwithstanding my preoccupation with politics, a further demand was made on my time by calling upon me to publish also the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*. Since its printing in type was not considered suitable, arrangement was made for its printing in lithograph. The Arabic text was first copied for the press, and this was completed in November 1921. The copying of the translation on the lithograph paper was then taken up. But hardly had this work begun when the decree of Time was pronounced once again against my plan.

‘At the close of 1921, the activities connected with the non-co-operation movement reached their climax, making it inevitable for Government to employ all its resources to thwart the movement. The Government of Bengal was the first to take action. On the 20th of November it banned all the organizations which, in one form or another, had something to do with the movement. This opened the way eventually to the declaration of the Indian National Congress as an unlawful body, and on the 10th of December, 1921, along with my colleagues, I was arrested.

‘This time, my arrest should not have disturbed the work of printing. The manuscript was in a completed form, and I had made every arrangement to carry on the printing of it in my absence. But the event which followed my arrest was distressing. It not only blocked the publication of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* and the commentary but cooled all my enthusiasm for literary work. When the Government realized that it had no data to proceed against me in a court of law, it began to search for possible adverse material. For the third time, my residence and my press were searched. Among those who came to carry out the search, there was hardly one who could understand Urdu or Arabic or Persian. Whatever they could lay their hands upon — things written in those languages — they thought might contain something of value to them. They

therefore carried away with them all the manuscripts that I had with me. Even the lithoforms were seized and rudely shoved into the heap of manuscripts which they had collected. When fifteen months after, I was set free, I applied to the Government for the restoration of my papers. It took a long time to return them. The material reached my hands in a ruined state.

‘The manuscript papers which the Investigation Officers had taken possession of were of different sizes and had been put together in separate bundles. Apart from certain complete and incomplete manuscripts, the collection had consisted of a variety of written matter. But when the material was returned to me, it presented the spectacle of a jumbled mass of mere rags.

‘The trial was agonizing; and yet, I tried to rise equal to the occasion. This was the bitterest cup Fate ever held to my lips. I drank its contents without the slightest demur. But I cannot deny that I still feel in my throat its bitterness.

‘The turmoil of political activity and the calmness of literary life could not subsist together. Conciliation between fire and flakes of cotton is never possible. I wished to bring the two together. On the one hand, I went on piling up the efforts of my thought, and on the other, invoked incessantly the scorching lightning. I knew the result. I have therefore no right to complain. If the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* and its commentary were ever to make their appearance before the public, it was clear that I should start writing them over again. After all that had happened, my spirits were so depressed, that, however much I tried, they refused to revive. I felt that the wound inflicted by the latest blow was too deep to heal in a moment.

‘What irritated me was the depressing thought that a thing which had already been written twice should have to be written over again. For an author, this is the most arduous of ordeals. He may easily produce

new matter running into hundreds of pages; but he will feel it most distressing to re-write even a single page of what had already been written and lost. To revive the enthusiasm for intellectual effort, once it is smothered by the ruination of one's achievement, is by no means easy. Only those can appraise the agony, who have themselves passed through it. When I first read the story of Carlyle, how he sat up to write over again his entire work on the French Revolution, and how the intellectual world of the time applauded his effort as something extraordinary, I had failed to see how it was extraordinary. But when I myself had to go through the same mill, I realized that his effort was not only extraordinary, but something amazing. No greater proof could be adduced to establish the greatness of Carlyle as a man of letters.

‘For several years, I could not bring myself to begin re-writing. Several times, I did open the bundles which contained the remains of my ruins; but the moment my eyes rested on them, old memories revived, and I had to lay aside the task before I had gone through a couple of pages.

‘But I could not turn away altogether from the task which concerned the deepest need of the Moslem mind. The delay in the discharge of this duty grew increasingly embarrassing to me. The feeling was growing on me that if this need was left unattended to by me, we never knew after what lapse of time what arrangement would be needed to fulfil it.

‘The year 1927 was coming to its close. Suddenly there was a rumbling in my long-benumbed spirit, and the door to literary activity which, notwithstanding repeated knocks in the past, had refused to yield to the pen, seemed now suddenly to burst open of its own accord. The work was commenced. For a little while, I felt intermittent jerks in my movement. But as I attuned myself to the new situation, my path grew

smooth, and a feeling came upon me that the past mishaps of life never had any existence for me. Not merely this, I myself noticed that my pace of writing was never so rapid as now.

‘The conquest of mind and heart is a wonderful experience. There was a time when, hard as one might try, every inclination to write was repressed. But now, I felt, I was so seized with the urge to write, that I realized that I could not control the movement of my pen. The thing went on. Feeling that the commentary on the *Surat-ul-Fatiha* was of primary importance to the interpretation of the Quran, I gave it my prior attention. Circumstances of my life were, no doubt, even now not conducive to quiet work. My health was gradually failing. The distempers of a political career were always there to disturb the tenor of my work. Nevertheless, I persisted and on the 20th of July, 1930, when I was in the District Jail of Meerut, I finished my work.’

Such is the sorrowful account of the publication of the first volume of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*. This was followed by a second volume taking forward both the translation and the commentary right up to the end of the 18th part of the Quran. The two were revised in the Ahmed-nagar Fort Jail and republished in 1945. But the third and the last volume in the series could not be issued in the lifetime of the Maulana. Not that the matter for this volume had not been written. It had been, as stated in the passage just quoted above. Evidently, the official pre-occupations of Maulana as Education Minister of India did not allow him the time to read his manuscript over again and prepare it for the press. Some months ago, his private secretary, Prof. M. Ajmal Khan, who had nearly despaired of its publication, asked me whether I would put in a word to Maulana to see if the manuscript could be obtained for publication. Accordingly, one day,

I raised the subject before him in the presence of the secretary, and suggested to him that if he had no time to look into the details of publication himself, the work might be handed to me, so that I might prepare it for the press in collaboration with his secretary, and seek his guidance on any matter connected with the work only when absolutely necessary. Maulana agreed to the proposition. But two days after, he said to me: 'I have searched for the manuscript. It is not to be found here (4, King Edward Road, New Delhi). My fear is that it might be lying in one of my trunks brought from the Ahmednagar Fort Jail. The trunks are in Calcutta.' The sad event of 22 February, 1958, has decreed that any further search for this manuscript is not to be made by Maulana himself. The task is now to be discharged by others. It is for the learned bodies, like the Sahitya Akademi, who have expressed their wish to publish Maulana's works in proper form, to seek out this manuscript on the strength of the clue afforded here. If that were obtained and published, it would mark the completion of Maulana's labours in the field of Quranic learning.

It is a matter for regret that the entire body of Maulana's Quranic studies has so far remained out of the reach of the educated classes not conversant with the Urdu language. Had a simultaneous attempt been made from the beginning, even from the days of the first appearance of his *Al-Hilal*, to transmit the result of his labours in the field of Quranic interpretation into English, the language generally known to the higher intelligentsia in most countries, and into Arabic, Persian and Turkish, the languages spoken by Moslems in West Asia, as well as into the leading languages of India, I dare say, a renaissance might have set in by now in the body of Islam calculated to bring the Moslems of the world closer to the followers of other faiths; for, such was his purpose in all his writings.



Still, a beginning may yet be made in this direction. Of all his writings, Maulana Azad had attached the greatest importance to his commentary of the Opening Chapter of the Quran, the *Surat-ul-Fatiha*, wherein he has surveyed the entire Quran to expatiate on its basic concepts as epitomized in the seven brief lines which constitute the Chapter. It was some three years ago that the idea, so far as I am aware, suggested itself to him that the work needed to be translated into English. He asked Dr. Syed Mahmud to sound me if I would undertake the task of translation. Maulana's wish in this connection was to me a command. The work was executed, and his suggestions, particularly in respect of some of the theological terms used in the text, were incorporated into the translation. But before printing this, he thought that a summary of it should be issued in advance under the title, *Basic Concepts of the Quran*. The summary so prepared and looked into by him, was, under his instructions, sent to the Diocesan Press, Madras, during the first week of February last. This will be out by the end of May, when the larger work, the translation of the commentary of the *Surat-ul-Fatiha*, will go to the press. The idea was that this should be followed in due course by the publication of an English translation of the entire *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, part by part. Whether this idea will ever materialize is more than I can now say. The *Basic Concepts of the Quran*, however, and the translation of Maulana's commentary of the *Surat-ul-Fatiha* will appear according to schedule. But the distressing thought haunts me that they are to appear when he is no longer in our midst.

The scene of his last moments is still green in my mind. I was probably destined to witness it. When I left Hyderabad for New Delhi to attend the annual meeting of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations on 14 and 15 February, 1958, I could not for a moment dream that I was proceeding there really to attend his funeral. As usual, I stayed at his residence during this visit also, and

was to have left New Delhi on 16 February. The railway berth had been booked, and there was no reason for me to stay on any longer. But on the morning of the 16th, Maulana asked me to cancel the reservation of my berth and stay on with him for a few days more. Of course, I stayed on; but it was only to share the sorrow that awaited everyone there. Did he have any premonition of the coming event that he asked me to stay on?

The feeling of sorrow is still fresh, and it is not easy for me to record in adequate words in what estimation I held him, both as scholar and as man. Even this note I have penned with no small effort. It was my privilege to have studied his mind and soul through his writings. It was also my privilege to have spent some little quiet hours with him, every now and then, in the closing years of his life and felt the touch of the nobility that dwelt in his soul. May that soul rest in peace! He was as I feel, of those to whom, when the labour of life is over, the greeting comes from across the grave:

*O thou soul that art at rest!  
Return to thy Lord, well pleased and well pleasing.  
Enter thou among My servants;  
Enter thou My Paradise!*

M. MUJEEB

## *The Tadhkirah: A Biography in Symbols*

'THIS SCRAPPY writing has been due to the insistence of a dear friend', Maulana Azad says at the end of the *Tadhkirah*. 'Now he is importuning me to write about my own life. That was his real object in persuading me to undertake all this long-winded writing.' The *Tadhkirah* can be read as an essay in Moslem religious thought. But it is much more than a book; it is a symbol; it is a personality. It is fire and passion, the utterance of an inspired preacher, the great sorrow of a great heart, the funereal music of a tragedy, and a jubilant song of victory. It is an autobiography that became an idea, an idea that transformed itself into flesh and blood.

But the *Tadhkirah* is also a curious book. It is not what the publisher, Mirza Fazluddin Ahmad, wanted it to be. His Foreword is a most interesting study. He seems obviously a hero-worshipper of a type which is the despair of all real heroes. He says that he came to know of Maulana Azad for the first time in 1902, while the Maulana was still a student, and watched his progress thereafter. When Maulana Azad began to publish the *Al-Hilal*, and took the heart of the Indian Moslems by storm, Mirza Fazluddin thought it was time that the admirers of this forceful personality should know something about him. But Maulana Azad treated his request for an autobiography as a joke. 'There are so many great men whose lives constitute a magnificent record, but no one has written about them. To ignore them and write about myself would be just ridiculous.' One feels grateful, however, that Mirza Fazluddin had no sense of humour. He pestered Maulana Azad, quietly but

persistently, till he was promised 'something every week'. This was between June and October, 1916. From the 'something' he received every week, Mirza Fazluddin first thought that Maulana Azad wished to begin his autobiography with an account of his own family. But when Maulana Azad digressed and seemed reluctant to return to the point, Mirza Fazluddin felt obliged to pull him up and ask him to be brief and relevant. But Maulana Azad would not be dictated to. 'Do not place restraints on the movement of my mind', he wrote in reply to a protest. 'I send you whatever my pen writes of its own accord. Go on collecting what I send. In any case it will be worth while.' But Mirza Fazluddin did not give up. He came and stayed at Ranchi, where Maulana Azad was interned, with a set of fifteen questions that must have covered every detail of Maulana Azad's life. He insisted on systematic replies to the questions. But Maulana Azad hid himself behind a decorative veil of poetic symbolism, making himself so much of a spiritual adventure that his physical life became an irrelevant detail. Mirza Fazluddin felt he had failed. We, on the other hand, realize how misleading biography must be unless it is written as Maulana Azad wrote about himself.

The *Tadhkirah* was to be in two volumes. Mirza Fazluddin's pruning of the text and excision of the long footnotes could not reduce it to less. But when he found that the chances of publishing the second volume were remote, he appended the autobiographical essay to the first volume. A book could hardly be more different than the *Tadhkirah* from what its publisher wanted it to be, and it is seldom that a writer, having given free rein to his imagination and his pen, and cast all thought of form and sequence of argument to the winds, has been so trapped by a publisher. He could not revise the text, he could not check up references, he could not even read the proofs. He was told of what was happening when two-thirds of the book was already printed. He shrugged his

shoulders. 'Other people have left behind records of their peace of mind, their tranquillity. There is not much harm done if the evidence of my troubled mind and diffused thinking finds a place among them.' It is this uninhibited spontaneity which makes the *Tadhkirah* so moving an account of persons and so impassioned a discussion of moral and religious issues. It is also because of this that it reflects the personality of Maulana Azad more accurately than the most exact biography could have done. The *Tadhkirah* is not an objective study. It is an advocacy of Truth, for which a profound scholarship, a rare command of words and a style of great power have been pressed into service. Maulana Azad is aware also of over-statements that could be pointed out. He says they are deliberate, and their purpose is to bring his views into stronger relief. He must have been also aware that in the over-statement in which he indulged there was a charm that could not fail to captivate the reader.

It is a strange question, but one must ask it. Where does the *Tadhkirah* begin? At the beginning, where Maulana Azad makes a brief reference to his family, concluding with the argument that it is not family that makes a man; or at the end, from the appendix, where he gives his 'biography'? In fact, the *Tadhkirah* cannot be fully understood unless one begins at the end, with the author's discussion of himself. This would explain not only his attitude but also his style, for his vigour and fluency, his symbolism, his lordship of the heaven and earth of the Urdu language are not literary attainments only, but the overflow of a spiritual force, the result of an illumination that is not of the light of this world. The *Tadhkirah* is the creation of a deeply religious mood, and should be read under the spell of this mood.

'I, who am a homeless wanderer, a stranger to my times and to myself, nourished on wounded sentiments, filled with the fullness of longing, a wreck of unfulfilled

desires, named Ahmad, and called Abul Kalam, was born in 1888 (1305 A.H.), coming into a world whose existence is a presumption, from a non-existence that has the semblance of reality, and became exposed to the allegation of being alive.

*There was an uproar, and in the sleep of non-existence we opened our eyes. But when we saw that the night of chaos was not over, we dozed off again.*

‘ My father gave me the chronogrammatic name of *Firoze Bakht* (“ of exalted destiny ”) . . . •

‘ Gracious God, what exaltedness of fate, what loftiness of destiny ! I have spent half of my life slipping off from the path of righteousness, stumbling and weary. What I suppose to be the other half is now passing away while I halt and rest. I have no intimation of the goal, nor do I see my feet on the way that could lead to the goal. When my feet were swift and my courage was youthful, the gateway of adventure and of search for my destiny remained closed. Now I am footsore, my body is bruised, I cannot walk with confidence, my courage fails me. And now, when yearning for the goal has opened my eyes, and negligence has turned in its sleep, the journey seems long, and its end lost in obscurity, my wallet is empty and the means I need are no longer there. The time for doing things is gone, and every moment I am oppressed with the feeling of having strayed far away from the caravan I wished to join. I am dejected and I despair of ever attaining the goal. Now, even if my feet recover their swiftness and my courage is given a new life, how shall the time I have squandered come back to me ? How can the caravan of hope that has already departed return to pick up those left behind because of their heedlessness ?

*I stepped aside to pull the thorn out of my foot, and the camel (whereon my Beloved sat) vanished from sight: because of a moment's carelessness my journey has become longer by a hundred years.*

‘Today or tomorrow, this matter of my exalted fate and lofty destiny will be decided for all time, “on the Day when every countenance will be either bright or black”. The real exaltedness is the exaltedness of that occasion, and in truth that man alone is fortunate who stands the test of the Day that is coming (the Day of Judgment). If there one’s lot is “cool breezes and fragrance”, “abundance of bliss” and “exaltedness,”<sup>1</sup> then one’s destiny is indeed noble, one’s fate an enviable fate. But if one is found to deserve the humiliation and the despair of those “whose faces are stained with dust and whose heads hang with shame,” and one is reckoned among “the guilty for whom there are no glad tidings”, then there is no hope of any end to grief and lamentation. Even the victories of Alexander and the throne of Jamshed would be no recompense for such a loss.

*If I am assured that union with Thee is attainable thereby, I would gamble away my heart and my religion and yet more.’*

Immersed in these thoughts, one almost feels shocked when Maulana Azad returns to matters of fact and date.

‘My native city is Delhi....but my mother came from the city built on sacred ground, the city to which the Prophet migrated, the city of his Prophethood, of Revelation<sup>2</sup>. It is the city to which the worshippers

<sup>1</sup> Terms in which Heaven is referred to in the Quran.

<sup>2</sup> Medina.

of Love turn, it is the *Ka'aba* of those who live in ecstasies of prayer.

*I have a heart that turns around like the needle of a compass. However I change its position, the needle points always towards the eyebrows of the Beloved.*

‘ And what shall I say of my real home? We are all, in accordance with the commandment — “ Live in this world like birds of passage ” — travellers and wanderers in this home of homelessness, all passing through existence as members of a caravan that knows not where it goes, but all destined to end up in the final resting-place, the grave. Only, for some it is a place of tribulation, and for some of the fortunate it is a home of joy.

‘ I was born and spent my childhood in the Barren Valley, near the *Ka'aba*, in the holy city of Mecca, in the part known as Qidwah, near the Bab al-Salaam. . . .

‘ Now that the year 1335 A.H. (1916 A.D.) is drawing to a close, the fleeting procession of my years has reached the stage of the 'thirties. . . .

‘ This stage will also pass in the twinkling of an eye, and what the future holds I do not know :

*No one tells me where my journey will end: I have traversed wilderness after wilderness, and there are yet more wildernesses to be crossed.*

‘ When I look back at the life that is over, it appears to be no more than haze and dust, and the life ahead seems no more than a mirage. My pen is hesitant, my mind overawed by the task of expression and interpretation. If I am to write of what I have felt, of events that have occurred in my life, what am I to say? How can one recount the experiences of a hazy vision



or a glorious mirage? Bubbles float on the waters, dust mingles in flight with the wind, storms tear down trees, floods carry away buildings; the spider spends his whole life spinning webs, the nest-adoring bird gathers twigs from the four corners of the earth, the lightning has an affair with the haystack, the fire with straw — if such happenings can be made into biographies, please make them. The story of my life will be of a kind with them, one half the smile of hope, the other half the lamentation of despair.

*You have not fallen in love or suffered the agonies of the lover: how can one unfold to you the sorrows of separation?*

‘ Once I was hope incarnate, now I am the embodiment of despondency.

*In brief the story of my eyes and of my heart is this: the heart has no rest and the eyes no sleep.*

‘ If in spite of this your desire for listening to stories is not satisfied, hear from me how my thirty years have passed. The lightning and the haystack do not together make a story that would take a whole night to tell. A passionate cry and a sigh of sadness are the beginning and end of it all.

*My neighbour heard me groan: he said,  
Khaqani is having another night of it.*

*There was a dawn which faded as we looked  
Like an 'Id which came in spring-time  
and passed away before the spring was over.*

‘ There was an evening of sorrow whose darkness submerged every lamp of hope that was lit:

*Since the flame of my grieving heart was put out,  
no lamp will shed light anywhere.*

‘ Or, let us say, there were two days, one of hope, the other of despair, one spent in satisfying the craving to build, the other in sorrowing over the wreck of all that was built; one spent in gathering straw for a nest, the other in shedding endless tears over the handful of ashes that was all the fruit of my labour.

*In this garden, where spring and autumn are wrapped  
together in an eternal embrace, Time has a wine-cup  
in its hand and a death's-head on its brow.*

‘ Abu Talib Kaleem (d. 1652) has written the biography of each one of us in four lines :

*This make-believe of being alive did not last for more  
than two days,  
And, Kaleem, how shall I relate how these two days  
passed:  
One I spent forming attachments with this and that,  
The next in tearing the heart away from all to which  
it clung.*

‘ And, in truth, no matter how long the breath<sup>1</sup> ng-space, its coming and going is no different. “ They say they had not been there but for an evening or a morning,” or, “ They said, we stayed for a day or about that.”<sup>1</sup>

*My childhood was a pleasant dream.  
It was a pity indeed that I awoke so soon.*

<sup>1</sup> From the account in the Quran of the Men of the Cave, who lived for several generations hidden in a cave, unaware of the passage of time.

‘ When I opened my eyes, adolescence had already dawned, and every thorn in the wilderness of my world was gay as a flower with the dews of ambition and desire. When I looked at myself, I saw a heart filled with quicksilver instead of blood. When I looked at the world, it seemed as if the morning delusion would have no midday sun to dispel it, and no shadows of failure or despondency would mark its evening. This whole habitation of hope and picture-house of fascination was for me only, for the delight of my eyes and the satisfaction of my heart: every nook and corner, every inch of its expanse lay anxiously in wait for me and my appetites. Whichever way I turned to listen, I heard the same call (to fulfil my heart’s desire). Was it the throb of my pleasure-seeking heart that was re-echoed, or was it a melody that life plays on the instruments of our senses to cast on us the spell of youthful heedlessness? . . .

‘ Heedlessness and inebriation chanted their magic spells, passion filled the cups, the madness of youth caught me by the hand, and my heart, loving to surrender itself, accepted as its goal the way shown to it by impulses and desires. Commonsense and reason were first disconcerted, but later they also beckoned me to come along. There was no way but this, there was no time but this:

*Do not be offended, O Saki,  
I am young and the world is young with me. . . .*

‘ Whichever way I took, chains and nooses entwined themselves around my feet; whatever refuge I sought was a prison-house of the senses. One could describe it if it were imprisonment of one kind only, or count the links if there were only one chain. I had only one heart, but arrows flew at it from a hundred different directions; my one pair of eyes was given a hundred

visions to behold. Each temptation shot its arrow, every robber of the senses flung his noose, every enchanter threw his spell of love, each breath-taking vision sought to captivate me entirely, to put its own halter of fascination round my neck. . . .

‘ It was not that I had been deprived of the power to choose, or that my eye of discernment had lost its sight. The lightning winked at me, the stars peeped at me now and then from behind the curtain of night, but they were fitful sparks that could not illumine the mounting darkness or mitigate the black fury of the storm. . . .

‘ When I envied the cypress its graceful stature, my heart was fired with longing for eminence and fame. When I observed the humility of the downtrodden grass, I was ashamed to have deemed myself worthy of aught. When the blowing of the morning breeze refreshed my heart, I was filled with distaste for my seclusion, and yearned for a life of wandering and adventure. Sometimes the sight of a stream flowing where it listed, without thought of aim and purpose, so carried me away that my eyes overflowed with tears and the restrictions and the bondage to which I was subject were as wounds upon my heart. When I saw the flowers smile, my eyes responded with generous tears. When the trees swayed and the branches danced with ecstasy, I was reminded of my own inertness and lack of feeling. To be brief, there were many reasons for my restlessness, and I had not lost my powers utterly. Lightnings flashed and clouds thundered their warnings, but alas! my sleep, too, was very deep, and the back on which I reposed in heedlessness needed the crack of the whip :

*It was I who was too weak to utter prayers: the gate of acceptance itself had remained open all the time in expectation and hope.*

‘ But it is better for me to declare openly and clearly what I have to say. . . .

‘ The cause of our ruin is this: in the tumult caused by self-forgetfulness, the voice of the conscience reaches but a few ears, and if it does, our own hands beat so loudly upon the drums of the intoxicated senses that the feeble voice of admonition is drowned in the noise. . . .

‘ But greater than all the facts and proved realities of the world is this truth:

*He that does everything for us looks to our needs:  
We bring misery upon ourselves if we worry about our  
concerns.*

‘ And there is a strange diversity and picturesqueness awaiting those who tread this path (of resigning themselves to the Divine Will). . . .

‘ Although the path is the same for all, the miracles beheld are manifold, and if the senses are lost, it is not because of the same vision:

*Thou sharest a different secret with each heart,  
And each beggar at Thy door puts on airs of his own.*

‘ One knocks and the door is not opened to him, another flees and nooses are thrown to catch him. There is no denying the principle of search and effort, but if He chooses to give without being asked, who is there to hold His hand? . . .

‘ All at once the grace of God appeared in the form of profane love, and the meandering paths of pleasure brought me of their own to the highway of Love. When anything is burnt, the fire and the flames increase by degrees, floods when they come spread by and by. But this was lightning, it appeared in a flash, and when I looked there was only a heap of ashes. . . .

‘In reality there are three stages: desire, love, truth.... What I mean by love here is love in the narrow, impure, physical sense, not the absolute Love which embraces all creation. There is nothing but Love in the whole Universe. It is the pillar upholding the heavens, the support and axis of the earth. All that is visible is Love, all that is hidden is Love. Our vision is to blame if, unable to perceive Unity, it has given many names to the one Reality. It is this inability to see things as they are, this lapse into multiplicity that has thrown veil upon veil on the unique Oneness of Beauty. Otherwise,

*There is only one lamp in this house around the light  
of which  
Wherever you look, people are gathered together in  
converse.*

‘No doubt this (love of mine) was also a lapse. But what shall we say of a lapse that casts us on the feet of the Beloved? The end of all effort is to reach Him. If lapses and intoxication lead us there, why should not a thousand forms of constancy and sobriety be offered up on their altar?

*If the Lord desires me to be avaricious,  
May all contentment be consigned to oblivion.*

‘The truth is that fulfilment for those who follow this path depends entirely on meeting and parting, or breaking and joining, and nearness is a stage that can be attained only when remoteness has been endured. That is, parting with all to be with One, cutting oneself off from all to join One. This door will open only when all the others that had been open before are closed:

*One is acceptable in the eyes of Love only when a  
thousand conditions have been fulfilled:  
And the first is remorse for any peace and contentment  
ever enjoyed.*

‘The thing to do is to break all attachments and snap all the chains that bind one to the worship of things other than God. There are only two ways in which this can happen: either a powerful Hand resolved on removing obstacles unties all knots one by one, unfastens all chains, link by link; or else a sword flashes, and in the twinkling of an eye, smiting with full force, shatters all bonds and chains. There is no obligation, then, to the deft finger untying knots, no counting of links broken. To burn a block of dry wood, one has to do a thousand things, and then only does a little smoke arise. But we know that lightning can, with a single flash of its eye, consume a thousand nests, a thousand heaps of carefully collected grain:

*I asked, how do you kill and restore to life?  
The Beloved killed me with a glance, and gave no  
further answer.*

‘Sacred and profane love have this in common: they attach to one and detach from the rest. That is why the nearest way to sacred love is through profane love.

*Our cup mellows the wine that is new.*

‘It is not so in pleasure-seeking and love only. Any half-way house from which the feet refuse to go further becomes an idol, and the traveller an idol-worshipper. The half-way house may be that of counting the beads of the rosary (of orthodox piety) or wearing the patchwork garment (of the Sufi). . . .

' So I thank God that this stage (of profane love) was not one where I tarried for long. In a year and five months I became versed in all its usages and conventions, leaving no nook, no corner, unseen.... Each traveller (on this way of profane love) has to adopt one of two methods; either the boisterousness and aimless wandering of the "tuti"<sup>1</sup> and the night-ingle, or the silent burning of the candle.... We know that it is easier to flare up like a flame than to glow with a contained heat like the oven and fulfil all the requirements and conventions of restraint and self-possession.

*Nakedness is pleasant, but the torn neck-band and the  
tattered lapel*

*Have a cull in all their own....*

' If there have been people who spent their lives wailing and crying in the wilderness, they did what they did. In my life every minute, every hour has been spent in an agony of suppressed sighs that consumed me from within; a thousand tumults have raged within my breast; and tears that did not find the expanse of the eyes raised storms within the narrow confines of my heart.

' Though in appearance this affair (of profane love) ended tragically, in reality all the joy of victory lay hidden in this defeat....

' The world in whose tavern of oblivion had been poured into me the wine of heedlessness, whose visions tempted my eyes, whose melodies charmed my ears, that same world so transformed itself now that every little bit of it was a picture of sobriety and wisdom, a lesson for the seeing eye and for the knowing mind, every particle was eager for converse, every leaf was a

<sup>1</sup> A singing bird.



document, flowers opened their lips, stones raised themselves to beckon, the downtrodden dust rose again and again to shower itself down like pearls, the heavens descended to answer questions, the earth lifted itself often and again that stars may be plucked from the sky, angels held the arms to prevent slipping, the sun came with a lamp to save from stumbling, all veils were thrown off, all curtains were riddled with holes; every eyebrow gave a message, every eye had stories to tell. . . .

‘ Whatever the situation may have been originally, it was altogether different from what I attained to gradually. Apart from this particular aspect, there is nothing in my beliefs, my actions, my habits and inclinations, my ideas and views, my ways, which I can correlate with my natural surroundings. . . . Whatever I have was granted to me by Love, the sovereign giver; in whatever ways I have been guided to the right path, it was because of this master and bestower of blessings, this leader of the way.

‘ It (Love) opened the door of learning, it taught me the truth of action, it had the books of divine wisdom on its tongue, the treasures of true knowledge were in its generous hands. It taught me the profundities of the *Shariah*<sup>1</sup>, it guided me across the hills and valleys of the *Tariqah*<sup>2</sup>, it revealed the secrets of the Quran, and initiated me into the mysteries of the *Sunnah*<sup>3</sup>, it gave me vision, it bestowed on me a sensitive heart. What problems did it not solve, what tangles did its eyes not unravel, what ailment of head and heart did it not cure? . . .

‘ But this I would say, that if there is anyone who is proud of having from the very first been pious and pure, then I too would affirm that I do not regret

<sup>1</sup> The Law.

<sup>2</sup> Sufism.

<sup>3</sup> Acts and sayings of the Prophet.

the gaiety, the pleasure-seeking, the indulgence from which in my twenty-first and twenty-second year (the real season of the madness of youth) I squeezed out all that could be got without leaving a drop of juice behind. If there are any who have raced along on a straight path, I would call them fortunate, but I do not consider it a misfortune that I had to extricate my feet from many quicksands, to save my clothes from being torn by thorns, that I had to break the chains which I myself had forged, that I had to destroy with my own hands the lengthy chronicle of my impulses, my longings, my hopes and my yearnings in order to find rest and peace in the place where I now am. . . .’

It is one of the achievements of Moslem religious thought to have harmonized orthodoxy and mysticism and corrected the tendency to Pharisaism by asserting the value of intensity of faith as against the habitual observance of commandments. The repentant sinner has not infrequently been assigned a higher position in the eyes of God than the meticulous follower of the Law whose heart is cold and obedience formal. But the defence of essential freedom was not the object of the *Tadhkirah*. On the contrary, Maulana Azad here affirms, with characteristic force, the supremacy of orthodoxy, the orthodoxy of those who upheld the truth, the word of God, against time-serving theologians, extravagant mystics and irreligious rulers. He does not adhere to any school of thought; he does not offer any particular interpretation of the Quran or the Law. He seems to be concerned only with Grace, and to be concerned with it so exclusively as to imply that the true orthodoxy is the orthodoxy of Grace.

The *Tadhkirah* begins with a brief reference to Maulana Azad’s family. ‘In my family three different lines have converged and all these three families had produced men of wisdom, with gifts of spiritual leadership. No member

of any of these families had any desire for worldly fame and eminence, but the world was always offering them honour and authority, which they sometimes accepted and sometimes refused.' Maulana Azad uses these references to show that he did not really believe that it was of any consequence to belong to a particular family. Then he goes on to give an account of Sheikh Jamaluddin (d. 1581), one of his maternal ancestors. This brings him to a discussion of the problems of the time when Maulana Jamaluddin lived, the days of Akbar and his assumption of the position of Imam and Khalifah. This was an age not only of controversy but of a deep spiritual unrest. The Sufis who believed in Immanence, the *bhaktas* who wished to destroy all exclusiveness, the men of culture who looked for intellectual food everywhere and in everything, the politicians who strove for unity for reasons of state, the women who wished to create variety in domestic life by adding to customs and ceremonies, all had together created a situation in which it appeared that men could live without the discipline of moral commands. But it was also a situation in which those who became the instruments of conscience exposed themselves to attack on religious grounds from theologians for whom the maintenance of existing conditions was a vested interest. The leaders of this attack in the particular instance which Maulana Azad discusses in the beginning of the *Tadhkirah* were the time-serving *ulema*, and the upholder of the truth was Syed Mohammad Jaunpuri. Syed Mohammad was alleged to have proclaimed himself the Mehdi who, according to a Moslem belief, is to appear in the last phase of human existence before the Day of Judgment. The time-serving *ulema* used all their influence and power to oppose the teachings of Syed Mohammad and undermine his moral and religious prestige. Their apparent objection was to Syed Mohammad's claim to be the Mehdi; what Maulana Azad emphasizes is that the real motive of opposition was the

reformist tendency of Syed Mohammad and his call to return to the Word of God and the example of the Prophet. Syed Mohammad was accused of having said things which were obviously heretical, and this provides Maulana Azad with the opportunity of discussing how far men, whom love of God has raised to a condition of almost permanent ecstasy, are responsible for the statements which they make, and whether it would be permissible to accord them the freedom of speech which they claim. It is here that Maulana Azad's own position is clarified. The man of God is known by the Grace which has been bestowed on him. It is the duty of the true believer not to subject his statements to legalistic scrutiny but to elicit from them the truth which they contain. For Maulana Azad, the Pride of Orthodoxy and Disregard for Works is an abomination. He marshals all his literary power to depict the blessedness of those who, like Syed Mohammad, Sheikh Alai (d. 1550), Shaikh Nayazi, Maulana Jamaluddin and others upheld the Word of God, and the immoral and destructive policy of the time-serving *ulema*, like Maulana Abdullah Sultanpuri and Sheikh Abdul Nabi.

Both these *ulema* represented a type, the type which has brought into Moslem religious law fictions, casuistry and disregard for true morality. Maulana Azad sees in Akbar's day the repetition of a situation which meritorious God had to face before, men like Imam Hussain, Sheikh Saeed ibn al Maseeb, Imam Malik, Imam Hanbal, Imam ibn Taimiya. He sees in his own day the abomination of doubt and atheism and he asserts with a fervour unsurpassed in Urdu literature, the eternal validity of the Word of God. He feels he is not alone in making this assertion in India, for apart from the personalities already mentioned, Sheikh Salami (d. 1547), Sheikh Daud (d. 1574), Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi, Shah Waliullah and many others upheld the truth. What is needed is the passion to understand, the dedication of the whole of

one's life to the performance of good works, the resolve to give battle to the evil-doer and to share the sorrows of God.

The *Tadhkirah* deals exclusively with Moslem traditions. Should it be considered, on this ground, as representing an early and relatively immature phase in the development of Maulana Azad's thought, a phase in which the universalism of his later work, the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, is only faintly visible? There was no doubt an interval of fifteen to twenty years between the two works; they were written in entirely different situations. It could be argued that the mood in which the *Tadhkirah* was written must have changed, that Maulana Azad's concept of Truth must have been broadened by the spiritual need to comprehend within it the larger field for the performance of 'good works' which his political activity had unfolded before him. But facts point in a different direction. Maulana Azad did not change. He did not grow from being a Moslem leader to become an Indian statesman. The *Tadhkirah* reflects the mood in which he was overwhelmed with the urge to uphold the Truth, and to carry with himself the largest number of those who understood his spiritual language, who could be called upon to maintain a great moral tradition. His whole argument bears within itself the promise fulfilled in the *Tarjuman-al-Quran*, the promise to expound the meaning of the Word of God. The *Tadhkirah* and the *Tarjuman* are complementary, and in the light of the *Tarjuman-al-Quran* the eloquent evangelism of the *Tadhkirah* acquires a universal significance.

## *The Reinterpretation of Islam*

### §1 — *Introductory*

THE SPREAD of Islam as a historical phenomenon has been studied with care within the last two centuries. Its progress in 16 or 17 countries and its large following are the results of economic, religious and racial forces. There are about 365 million Muslims in the world.<sup>1</sup> It is now generally accepted that Islam produced a great civilization; that its scholars contributed to literature, science, philosophy, theology, history, law; that in aesthetic conception, Muslims were supreme in architecture, and their artists profoundly influenced painting, music and developed art-crafts such as mosaic, pottery, calligraphy, book-binding, embroidery, dress-making, and the culinary art. And now tardily it has been recognized by scholars that the rise of Islam was not due mainly to the sword in the outstretched arm of the Arab, but to the teaching and personality of Muhammad, the son of Abdallah: an Arab, whom Toynbee describes as one of the greatest benefactors of humanity.<sup>2</sup>

This is a recent opinion; earlier in Europe, Muhammad was regarded as a pagan idol, an impostor, a schismatic and a false prophet.<sup>3</sup> This change of opinion is due to the rise of studies in Islam and its languages, and the perception of truth as the end of science. A false

<sup>1</sup> Louis Massignon, *Annuaire du Monde Musulman*, 4th ed., Paris 1955, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization on Trial*,<sup>4</sup> (London, 1953), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> G. F. Pijper, *Islam and the Netherlands*, (Leiden, 1957), p. 3.

prophet applying the methods of force was too simple an explanation for one of the most remarkable civilizing forces in history. With the rise of Gandhi and the independence of India, the sword itself was palpably demonstrated to be a weaker instrument than the spirit of man. Thus gradually the world of scholarship has come to regard Islam as a worthy object of study and it now regards it as axiomatic that understanding of Islam and the forces it releases is impossible without a thorough study of its religion and law.<sup>4</sup> European orientalists have, during the 19th century, made considerable progress in this direction; but our greatest debt is due to the Dutch orientalist, C. Snouck Hurgronje, the founder of the 'modern' school of the study of Islamic Jurisprudence. He was followed by Goldziher, Wensinck, Bergstrasser and now, Santillana, Milliot, Schacht and Tyan.

In Islam, law is not distinct from religion. The two streams flow in a single channel and are indistinguishable. They are known as *sharī'at* and *fiqh*, the two aspects of the religious law of Islam. *Sharī'at* is the wider circle, it embraces in its orbit all human actions; *fiqh* is the narrower one, and deals with what are commonly understood as legal acts. *Sharī'at* reminds us always of revelation, that '*ilm* (knowledge) which we could never have possessed but for the Koran or *ḥadīth*; in *fiqh*, the power of reasoning is stressed, and deductions based upon '*ilm* are continuously cited with approval. The path of *sharī'at* is laid down by God and His Prophet; the edifice of *fiqh* is erected by human endeavour. In the *fiqh*, an action is either legal or illegal, *yajūzu wa mā lā yajūzu*, permissible or not permissible. In the *sharī'at*, there are various grades of approval or disapproval. *Fiqh* is the term used for the law as a science; and *sharī'at*, for the law as the divinely ordained path of rectitude.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 18, after C. Snouck Hurgronje.

It must, however, be candidly confessed that the line of distinction is by no means clearly drawn, and very often Muslim doctors themselves use the terms synonymously; for, the criterion of all human action, whether in the *shari'at* or in the *fiqh*, is the same — seeking the approval of Allah by conforming to an ideally perfect code.<sup>1</sup>

Democracy insists that the State is one and that its laws are of equal application. Laws are impersonal and objective rules which the State applies to all its citizens without exception. But religion is based on the personal experience of great teachers; its appeal is personal, immediate and intuitive. While its laws and its ritual and its trappings can be of general application in a community, the inner core of belief is exclusively personal. No State can compel religious allegiance as it can enforce its laws. Hence the well-known dicta of the law that before the law, all religions are equal; that the question of a particular belief is an objective fact, to be proved or disproved as any other fact, and that the court cannot be called upon to determine the truth or otherwise of a religious belief. The faith of Islam can teach the belief in one God and His Messengers; but it cannot and ought not to lay down *how* I am to apprehend God and *how* it can enforce such obedience. By 'enforce' is meant (a) order the doing of a thing and (b) punish its disobedience. How can a matter of faith be a matter of enforcement by an outside agency? A teacher can teach me; he can inspire me by his example; he can fire my enthusiasm. But how can he make me believe? Thus there is a clear difference between a rule of law which can be enforced by the State, and a rule of conscience which is entirely a man's own affair.

Today in Islam this is the greatest difficulty. *Shari'at* embraces both law and religion. Religion is based upon spiritual experience; law is based upon the will of the

<sup>1</sup> Fyzee, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, 2nd ed., 1955, p. 21.



community as expressed by its legislature, or any other law-making authority. Religion is unchangeable in its innermost kernel — the love of God for *His own sake* is sung by Sufis and mystics throughout the world. If *shari'at* is the name given to this duality, then one of the forces constantly pulls in the other direction. The perception of God is a mystery and man is forever pursuing it. In this pursuit, all men of faith regardless of their particular religion are equal. But laws differ from country to country, from time to time. They must ever seek to conform to the changing pattern of society. The laws of the Arabs cannot be applied to the Eskimos; and the laws of the bushmen of Australia are unsuitable for the fertile basin of Uttar Pradesh. Laws are like metals in the crucible of time and circumstance; they melt, they solidify into different shapes; they re-melt and assume diverse forms. This process of evolution is co-terminous with human society. Nothing is static except that which is dead and lifeless. Laws can never be static. India is changing with the rest of the world before our own eyes. These changes affect our powers over nature, our views on life, our desire to improve the social conditions of men. Our legislature pours out a stream of laws, and these attempt to regulate our dealings in society.

But the mind and conscience of man is free. He must be permitted to believe what he wills in respect of the ultimate things in the universe, and he cannot be fettered in his faith and imagination. There is thus a strife in Islam. First, the age-long conceptions of the religious law come into conflict with modern civil law, e.g. insurance or the loans which Government raises. Insurance and the giving or taking of interest is forbidden by the *shari'at*, while it is not only permitted but encouraged by the modern State.

Secondly, in order to do away with the rigours of the older law, principles of a newer system are engrafted upon the ancient law of Islam; or a new set of laws

replaces the *sharī'at*. An illustration of the former is the Muhammadan Law of Gifts in India, where the principles of English equity are engrafted upon the *fiqh* (Islamic Law, proper). An illustration of the latter is the Evidence Act in India, which completely replaces the Islamic Law of Evidence. Everywhere in Muslim countries this dual process is at work — *qānūn*, the secular law is eating into and replacing the laws of the *sharī'at*. In North Africa, French jurisprudence; in Central Asia, the Soviet laws; in India, the Common Law; in Indonesia, the Dutch law are profoundly influencing not only the law but the meaning of justice itself as it affects the Muslims.

We have seen that *sharī'at* is both law and religion. Law is by its very nature subject to change. The heart of religion on the other hand is not subject to change, or at any rate, the belief in God is an unchangeable ideal, a perennial quest. If two such divergent forces are made to live together, there will be strife. It is this strife which is the main object of this paper. My solution is (a) to define religion and law in terms of 20th century thought, (b) to distinguish between religion and law in Islam, and (c) to interpret Islam on this basis and give a new meaning to the faith of Islam. If by this analysis any element that some have regarded as part of the essence of Islam perishes, then we have to face the consequences. If, on the other hand, belief in the innermost core can be preserved and strengthened, the operation although painful will produce health and vigour in a palsied body which is withering away without a fresh ideal to guide it.

*Need for reinterpretation:* When we examine the belief of Muslims, we may generally distinguish between the orthodox and the unorthodox. This is not a scientific classification, and we must not proceed upon the assumption that it is possible to classify matters of conscience

in a logical manner. There are shades of belief, agnosticism and disbelief. The nature of belief is such that a mathematical or purely formal method of classification would lead to error. Hence a general classification would be (i) orthodox and (ii) unorthodox (or preferably, non-conformist). By the orthodox are meant all those who, whether they believe in or practise the regular ritual of Islam or not, are yet convinced that on the whole the religion as laid down by the Imams, whatever be their creed, is the religion and the ritual which is beneficial for Muslims in our times, and any radical change will lead to danger.

It is impossible, and perhaps undesirable, to go into further details of this group. For instance, some believe sincerely in and practise in large measure the specific ritual, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc. Even if they cannot perform some of the *aḥkām* (rules of *shari'at*), they acknowledge that they are negligent and that it would be better for them to conform closely to the ancient patterns of ritual. There are some who are perfect in ritual but little in faith or character. There are some of perfect character but negligent of ritual. There are some who have remarkable faith in God and in the regeneration of Islam. And some there are who drift along the stream of life, careless of destiny, unpricked by conscience, but full of a childlike faith. All these, and others not mentioned who believe in Islam, in its orthodox formulation and creed, whatever their faith, character and action, and whether they accept the whole of that creed or not, are called 'the orthodox'.

The non-conformists (or unorthodox, if you like) on the other hand are essentially different. The term 'unorthodox' is to be avoided. Strictly speaking there is no 'orthodoxy' or 'unorthodoxy' in Islam. Only an organized church can lay down canons of orthodoxy, heresy and unorthodoxy. If there is no church, it is difficult to conceive of a heretic or an unorthodox person. But, in a

manner of speech, a non-conformist is one who does not believe in the regular ritual of Islam and does not accept the basis of religion as laid down by the Imams. The normal definition of faith is:

- (i) profession by tongue;
- (ii) sincerity of belief; and
- (iii) action in conformity with the principles laid down by the authoritative legists.<sup>1</sup>

Barring (i) he hardly accepts anything else in its entirety. Sincere profession of faith is the only test of Islam; the faith may be mistaken in certain details; the ritual of Islam in all its details may not be accepted. This constitutes non-conformity. If you accept, but do not act, you are still orthodox; but if you do not accept any dogma or principle other than the belief in God and the Prophet, then you are a 'non-conformist'.

A fair proportion of the educated Muslims in India belong to this class. Some do not accept the authority of the Imams; some do not think prayer is necessary; some believe that work is prayer; some vaguely talk against religion itself. But the test remains: Do you, or do you not, accept that Islam, as interpreted by the Imams of authority, is on the whole and for the generality of mankind, beneficial and true?

My answer in humility and with respect is in the negative, and therefore I am a non-conformist. I should, however, like to make it clear that I am not a non-believer. A non-believer is one who denies the validity of religion itself, or at least challenges some of the basic tenets of religious belief. A non-conformist may deny or question some of the forms and dogmas of religion but he is essentially a religious person. Historical evidence suggests that non-conformists have very often been men of deep religious faith and have been non-conformists precisely because of their belief in religion. I refuse to

<sup>1</sup> This definition is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa. See also Cadi Nu'mān, *Da'd'imu'l-Islām (The Pillars of Islam)*, 1, 3 (Cairo, 1951).

regard the basis of the existing formulation of faith as either beneficial or true in the world of today, and would like to redefine my faith. It is not my intention to form a new sect and I do not profess to be a teacher. But in this quest and in this adventure, I firmly believe that Islam, as I understand it, has much to offer to the human spirit in the 20th century. I cannot, however, accept its definition, as laid down by the generally-accepted Sunnite Imams or by any of the Shiite schools. In the following pages, I propose to examine briefly the principles of reinterpretation, and I sincerely hope that rationalism will grow within the fold of Islam.

## §2 — *Principles of Reinterpretation*

*Historical Approach:* The message of Islam was sent to the world fourteen centuries ago. Does it need reinterpretation? Is it not sent to the whole world and for all time? The answer to both questions is in the affirmative. Even if a message is true, and, in a sense eternal, it is by the very premises essential to reinterpret it in accordance with the science, philosophy, psychology, metaphysics and theology of the modern world; nay, the sum-total of the world's thinking and its blazing light should be brought to bear upon it.

In the history of man, it is only some 10,000 years ago that he conceived the idea of certain divinities as ruling his destiny. The stars in the sky, the animals in the wood, the birds in the air, the reptiles of earth contained supernatural beings endowed with the power to do harm, and all over the world man worshipped these deities, and by sacrifices and chants and religious practices and ritual and dancing tried to ward off the evil. Some 5,000 years later, that is, only 5,000 years ago, in Mesopotamia or thereabouts, and also in India, man for the first time in recorded history came to believe that it was not a thousand deities, but one Supreme Being, the Brahman,

the Absolute, the Creator, Rām or Raḥīm, by whatever name you call or miscalld Him, which was the *one* object of worship. After a prolonged tribulation of the spirit came this great discovery, probably the greatest single discovery in the history of man. It is greater than the discovery of zero, greater than the discovery of fire, of iron, of relativity, of any known thing. The concept itself is unique; it has a mysterious and compelling power; it revivifies broken spirits, it gives meaning to life, it makes man see that which he cannot see, makes man hear what he cannot hear, makes man know what he cannot know; it does not depend upon science and its changing moods; it is an eternal concept, not liable to change, decay or imperfection. The message has often come to man through the vibrant spirit of a sensitive soul and one among the elect was Muhammad. The history of his quest, his mental agony and final illumination, is to be found in the Koran, and the Book is full of that inward perception of Truth which shows practically the history of man's cognition of God.

*When the sun is overthrown,  
And when the stars fall,  
And when the hills are moved,  
And when the camels big with young are abandoned,  
And when the wild beasts are herded together,  
And when the seas rise,  
And when souls are reunited,  
And when the girl-child that was buried alive is asked  
For what sin she was slain.  
And when the pages are laid open,  
And when the sky is torn away,  
And when hell is lighted,  
And when the garden is brought nigh,  
(Then) every soul will know what it hath made ready,  
Oh, but I call to witness the planets,  
The stars which rise and set,*

*And the close of night,  
And the breath of morning  
That this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger,  
Mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne,  
(One) to be obeyed, and trustworthy. .<sup>1</sup>*

The belief in the existence of God is based upon *experience*, it cannot be proved, nor can it be disproved. Therefore it has stood the test of time. Not so, the works of reason or knowledge or science. The postulates, hypotheses, theories and 'facts' of science are in their very essence capable of change, but the belief in God is one and unchangeable and immediate and intuitive. As I have said before, to those who believe in it, it is the greatest single discovery of man. It is *not* an invention.

But such truth can only be communicated through an imperfect instrument, language. Language is human, variable, subject to change. No language can be read or understood for more than 5,000 or 10,000 years. We have many writings of man on earth the meanings whereof are forgotten. It is difficult to believe that the language of the Koran will be read and understood by man in the year 10,000 A.H. or 10,000 A.D. And philological studies make it perfectly clear that the meanings of words, their nuances and shades, are subject to evolutionary change. No language remains static. The evocative power of words and phrases increases and decreases; it is not a constant factor, it is one of the known variables. Whence it is clear that the very meanings of the words, phrases, idioms, metaphors and imagery of the Koran have changed, are changing and will go on changing, until in course of time may be they can no longer be fully comprehended. But we Muslims believe that the central message will last longer than its language, and that is the belief in God. 'Heaven and earth shall pass

<sup>1</sup> M. Pickthall, *Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, London, 1930, *Sūrah LXXXI*, pp. 636-37.

away, but my words shall not pass away' (*Matt. xxiv, 35*). Therefore, to me it is clear, that we cannot go 'back' to the Koran, we have to go 'forward' with it. I wish to understand the Koran as it was understood by the Arabs of the time of the Prophet, only to *reinterpret* it and apply it to my conditions of life and to believe in it, so far as it appeals to me as a 20th century man. I cannot be called upon to live in the desert, to traverse it on camel-back, to eat locusts, to indulge in vendetta, to wear a beard and a cloak, and to cultivate a pseudo-Arab mentality, just as I cannot be called upon to believe in the details of the prescriptions of the Koran. I must distinguish between its real message and the imagery it employs. I must distinguish between poetic truth and factual truth. I must distinguish between the husk and the kernel of religion. I am bound to understand and accept it as a modern man, and not as one who lived centuries ago. I respect authority, but cannot accept it in the matter of conscience.

Islam is based upon the Koran, and the Koran is to be interpreted in its historical setting and on chronological principles. We must first study the main principles of Judaism and Christianity before approaching Islam. It is only when Judaism and Christianity are understood fully in their historical setting that the message of the Prophet and its meaning becomes clear.

*Fundamental Principles:* The six principles which are necessary for a modern reinterpretation of Islam are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

- I — Study of History of Religions.
- II — Comparative Religion of the Semitic Races.
- III — Study of Semitic languages and philology.
- IV — Separation of Law and Religion.

<sup>1</sup> See my two papers: *Law and Religion in Islam*, Journal, Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, 1953, 29-48 and *Islamic Law and Theology in India*, *Middle East Journal*, 1954, 103-83.



V — Re-examination of *sharī'at* and *kalām*.

VI — Reinterpretation of cosmology and scientific facts.

*I — History of Religions :*

The science of History of Religions is now recognized as an important discipline in many Universities. In a recent paper Prof. Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago) describes *The Nature and Program of the History of Religions Field*.<sup>1</sup> He shows that the 'History of Religions' was formerly called 'Comparative Religion'. The Department of Comparative Religion works in close collaboration with the Department of Divinity in the University of Chicago. The establishment of the Haskell Lecturership has strengthened the school and such distinguished names as D. B. Macdonald (Hartford Seminary), A. V. Williams Jackson (Columbia), Maurice Bloomfield (Johns Hopkins), Karl Bezold (Heidelberg), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (Calcutta), H. A. R. Gibb (Oxford), and Louis Massignon (Paris) have served to build up a learned tradition.

Kitagawa proceeds to explain the nature of the discipline and he says :

'Obviously, the History of Religions or *Religionswissenschaft* does not monopolise the study of religions. Normative disciplines, such as theology and philosophy, and descriptive disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology and others, are concerned with various aspects of religions and religious phenomena. At the same time, the History of Religions is not merely a collective title for a number of related studies, such as the history of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and primitive religion, or the comparative studies of doctrines, practices and ecclesiastical institutions of

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature and Program of the History of Religions Field*, reprinted from *Divinity School News* (University of Chicago), November 1957, 13-25.

various religions. In short, the History of Religions is neither a normative discipline nor solely a descriptive discipline, even though it is related to both.' <sup>1</sup>

Another important statement will be found later :

'The work of the Department of Comparative Religion deals with the study of religious origins, the function of religion in the life-development of the race, the development of individual religions, a comparison of the elements of the great religions and with the validity and worth of religion as a function of reality. Time is given to the history of thought in relation to the various phases of the science of religion itself.' <sup>2</sup>

It is this kind of training and study which should form the background for a true appreciation of Islam. This would be a good beginning for our theological students.

## II — Semitic Religions :

Proceeding from these foundational studies we must try to acquire some knowledge of Semitic Religions prior to the advent of Moses. And for such a study Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites* should be made the starting point. Later a historical study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam should follow. The affinities between Judaism, Christianity and Islam are so numerous and so fundamental that a separate discipline, *The Comparative Science of Semitic Religion*, can easily be created. Such an integrated and comparative study has become a great necessity at present. We have scholars of Christianity with a good knowledge of Islam. We have scholars of Islam who are familiar with Christianity or Judaism, and we have scholars of Judaism who have mastered either Christianity or Islam ; and some of the languages.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 21.

But we have few scholars, if any, who have equal familiarity with the principles, the history and later developments of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. A special aspect of the study would be the hybridization of religious ideals. The Ismaili Khojas are hybrids between Islam and Hinduism; the Nosairis adopt the Christian dogma of the Trinity and engraft it on a form of Islam; and there must also be Muslim or Jewish sects, influenced by their counterparts. The Koran and the life of the Prophet would be clearer if such studies are undertaken in a scientific and objective spirit.

### *III — Comparative Philology of the Semitic Languages :*

We now come to language and its accurate comprehension. The Arabic language must be studied in its philological affinities. It must be clearly realized that Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, etc., belong to the philological group called the Semitic languages. An expert knowledge of Arabic presupposes some familiarity with the other languages in the same group, and a competent knowledge of the comparative grammar of the Semitic languages. On this subject the works of the German orientalisists Noeldeke, Brockelmann and others will have to be studied with care, so that we may not be misled by the mistakes and guesses of the medieval Arab lexicographers. A brief glance at a standard work, such as A. Jeffery's *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* (Baroda, 1938), or S. Fraenkel's *Die aramaischen Fremdwörter in Arabischen* (Leiden, 1886), to take two familiar examples, would show what advances have been made by European philologists in the last two centuries.<sup>1</sup> For instance, we must no longer consider *fārūq* as being derived from the root *faraqa* (to distinguish), but as coming from a Syriac word *pāroqā* meaning 'deliverer', for Omar was named 'The Deliverer' of the Christians from the tyranny of the Muslims. The title was given by Christians who

<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Law and Theology in India*, op. cit., 181-82.

used the Syriac language in a certain chronicle. Such examples can be multiplied.

#### IV — *Separation of Law from Religion:*

The separation of *civil* law from the *moral* or *religious* law can now no longer be delayed in Islam. We must in the first instance distinguish between the universal moral rules, such as truthfulness, marital purity, honesty, etc. and the particular moral rules, such as the prohibition of the eating of ham and the drinking of wine. The former are enjoined by all religions; the latter are not. A difference of emphasis is clearly indicated in such cases.

And then we must deal with law. The first task is to separate logically the dogmas and doctrines of religion from the principles and rules of law. To me it is an axiom that the essential faith of man is something different from the outward observance of rules; that moral rules apply to the conscience, but that legal rules can be enforced only by the State. Ethical norms are subjective; legal rules are objective. The inner life of the spirit, the 'Idea of the Holy', must to some extent be separated from the outward forms of social behaviour. The separation is not simple; it will even be considered un-Islamic. But the attempt at a rethinking of the *sharī'at* can only begin with the acceptance of this principle.

Hence, new categories of the legality of actions must be laid down. We have the classical *sharī'at* values [*al-aḥkām al-khamsa* — *farḍ* (compulsory), *mandūb* (recommended), *mubāḥ* (permitted), *makrūh* (reprehensible), *ḥarām* (forbidden)]; to them must be added actions which are outside the realm of *sharī'at* but which, under certain circumstances, may nevertheless be perfectly lawful according to the law of the civil courts, for instance, the application of civil law in Turkey, civil marriage and divorce, company law, the law of insurance, the law of the air, hire-purchase agreements, international financial

transactions, involving payment and receipt of interest, government loans, and the like. The sanctity attached to the law administered in the courts of the country and by specialized tribunals, such as those of income-tax or revenue or industrial disputes, may, in the eyes of a Muslim, be of a slightly different character; nevertheless, there should be, and can be, acceptance of the secular law in principle.<sup>1</sup> This has happened in Judaism. Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum says: 'We did not leave the Torah, but the Torah, as far as it is civil and criminal law, ceased to function in our lives the moment we became citizens of the countries of the Western Civilization.'<sup>2</sup>

One result of such analysis would be on the constitution of a country. According to Islam, God is the owner of everything; He is the true sovereign in a State. Such a theory would be impossible in the modern world, and the only workable principle is as laid down by numerous modern democratic constitutions, namely, that the people of a country are sovereign within their own domain. If religion is gradually freed from the shackles of civil law, and law (*qānūn*) is allowed to grow and develop freely, Muslim society is bound to progress as rapidly as is the case in Turkey.

Religion should place emphasis on devotion to God, cleanliness of spirit, orderliness of life, and not be enmeshed in the minutiae of particular do's and don'ts. Apart from everything else, the Islamic virtues of generosity, humility, brotherliness, courage and manliness should be taught by examples drawn from early Muslim history. Additionally, the ethics and morality of Islam should be fortified by the teaching of the ethical and philosophical teachers of the modern world. We cannot make the Koran a book 'which imprisons the living

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 180-81.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish Mission*, (James Clarke, London. No date. Preface dated 1949), 94.

word of God in a book and makes tradition an infallible source. . . ' The Rabbis 'do not listen to their conscience, they consult law books.'<sup>1</sup> So do the religious mentors of Islam.

*V — Re-examination of shari'at and kalām (theology) :*

The theology of Islam must be re-examined in all its aspects, and modern philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, psychology and logic should be applied to formulate and restate its essential dogmas. The scholastic theology of Islam (*'ilm al-kalām*) in its various aspects has not been substantially restated since the days of al-Ghazālī. The current stream of European thought; the great advance made by Protestant thinkers from Luther downwards, and by the scholastics from St. Thomas Aquinas and Suarez down to Maritain and Berdyaev; and the speculations of Jewish and other thinkers of the modern world must be used with discrimination to fortify and restate Islamic theological principles.<sup>2</sup>

*VI — Reinterpretation of Cosmology and Scientific Facts :*

Wherever the ancient scriptures or traditions speak of natural phenomena or scientific facts, their dogmatic character should be questioned. The passages should be interpreted and accepted, modified or rejected, in terms of modern science, including anthropology, biology, physics, mathematics, chemistry and medicine. The concepts of the world, time, and the universe have changed radically since the days of Copernicus. Islam must take heed of these changes and scientific absurdities should be removed from the fabric of religion.

For instance, great emphasis need not be laid on the virgin birth of Jesus, or the descriptions of Heaven and Hell in the Koran.<sup>3</sup> Their literal truth need not be

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Islamic Law and Theology in India*, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Kor., Sūra LV, *ar-Raḥmān*.

accepted, their poetic truth is cardinal and sufficient. The spiritual beauty and strength of fasting can be emphasized without insisting on its hide-bound prescriptions. Throughout the Arab East, during Ramaḍān, the night is treated as if it was meant for feasting, visiting friends, attending music festivals, watching libidinous dances, and wasting time and money. Perhaps an insistence on austerity and elasticity in ritual would be more in consonance with the spirit of the faith.

*Subsidiary Principles* : When a rule is laid down in the Koran or *shari'at*, it is necessary to determine whether it is a rule of law or a rule of ethics. If it is a rule of law, the State should enforce it; if it is a rule of ethics, the State cannot enforce it. Once it is determined in accordance with the foregoing principles that there is a clear rule of law laid down in the Koran, the question assumes importance. The law of God, it is said, cannot be disobeyed. This statement, it is respectfully submitted, can no longer be accepted. Law can be changed, but religion is more permanent.

In order to examine a clear dictate of the Koran, such as the prohibition of wine or of ham, we must follow a certain procedure. The procedure submitted is as follows :

(1) *What was the rule or custom before Islam?*

A proper examination of all the existing evidence is necessary as a preliminary to the assessment of the Prophetic reform. A mere reliance on Muslim writers is not enough; we have also to consider pre-Islamic literature, inscriptions, documents (including papyri), evidence from the Semitic dialects, Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic, Greek, Latin and any other sources. The inquiry can only be limited by the resources of 20th century scholarship.

(2) *How did the Prophet try to reform it?*

The exact circumstances of the origin of doctrines such as *waqf*, food and drink, prayer and ablutions, fasting and alms-giving would be revealing. The true interpretation of Koranic verses, studies in the chronological order, with all the *apparatus criticus* of Semitic philology, will have to be employed. The authenticity and antiquity of *hadith* will have to be investigated afresh; the authority of ancient scholars and Imams cannot be accepted as final, and without reservation.

(3) *What were the results of such reform?*

The case of women may be taken as an illustration. The law of marriage in Islam, with certain important reservations, is beneficial to women; and so is the law of inheritance. Why is it that almost everywhere in Islamic countries women have been denied rights over immovable property by custom? That is so in India, Indonesia, Egypt, Persia, and North Africa. And what is more disturbing is that not only is woman denied her Koranic rights but she is considered *inferior* to man and not fit for certain political rights. Travel in Muslim countries demonstrates the painful fact that woman is considered the plaything of man and seldom a life-companion, co-worker, or helpmate. It is not enough to brush this aside by saying that a particular practice is un-Islamic or contrary to the spirit of Islam. It is necessary to face facts, to go to the root of the matter, to give up wrong principles and interpretations, and to re-educate the people. The Koranic verse, 'Men are in charge of women, because God hath made one of them to excel the other'<sup>1</sup> should be reinterpreted as purely local and applicable only for the time being. Its wider application should be reconsidered, and if that is not enough, it should be held to be a rule of social conduct no longer applicable in modern life.

<sup>1</sup> Kor., iv, 34.



(4) *How were the rules interpreted and applied in the various schools of law in the succeeding centuries?*

The above two rules are closely connected. Contemporary sources, particularly independent and critical accounts, will have to be scrutinized to discover what the immediate results were, and the historical evolution of the doctrines will have to be examined. Were the commands obeyed in the letter and the spirit in the succeeding centuries? Were they misunderstood or changed or distorted? Were they used for political or personal ends? These are some of the questions that arise.

(5) *What is the present state of the law? How far does it fall short of the highest norms fixed by modern juristic thinking? In what way can the rules be amended, repealed, or sustained so as to conform to modern concepts of social justice and to promote the social well-being of the Muslim community as an integral part of society in general?*<sup>1</sup>

These are questions having particular reference to law; a similar process can be applied to theological and moral rules. If the complete fabric of *sharī'at* is examined in this critical manner, it is obvious that in addition to the orthodox and stable pattern of religion, a newer 'protestant' Islam will gradually arise in conformity with conditions of life in the 20th century, and cutting away the dead wood of the past. We need not bother about nomenclature, but if some name has to be given let us call it 'Liberal Islam'.

### §3 — Results

The greatest gift of the modern world to man is freedom — freedom to think, freedom to speak, freedom to act. This freedom is circumscribed by law. Law says that the freedom of each man is limited by the equal freedom of every other man. Therefore, you cannot speak ill

<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Law and Theology in India*, op. cit., 183.

of another man; this would be libel. And you cannot speak ill of the State, for this would be sedition. Criticism is distinguished from libel and sedition. The limits of proper criticism and unfounded accusations amounting to libel and sedition are laid down with precision. But apart from this, the modern age insists on liberty of thought, expression and action.

And what does Islam do, so far as religious doctrine is concerned? It closes the Gate of Interpretation.<sup>1</sup> It lays down that legists and jurisconsults are to be divided into certain categories, and no freedom of thought is allowed. Iqbal and Abdur Rahim amongst recent Indian writers have rebelled against this doctrine, and yet no one ventures to face the wrath of the *ulema*. Recently, some two years ago, there were disturbances in Pakistan and an inquiry was instituted. The Chief Justice of Pakistan questioned several *ulema* regarding Islam and its essential tenets. And, according to his analysis, some of the *ulema* were, in the opinion of their fellow-*ulema*, unbelievers.<sup>2</sup> Such is the degree to which fossilisation of thought has taken place in our faith. Islam, in its orthodox interpretation, has lost the resilience needed for adaptation to modern thought and modern life. Humayun Kabir, in a recent article, says: 'The bewildering complexity of the modern age demands a faith that is rational in nature and universal in content. Those who are theists find in God a natural focus of universal meaning. Even those who are not believers may find purpose in the concept of human dignity. Truth, beauty

<sup>1</sup> A standard, orthodox discussion of the subject will be found in Muḥammad Rashid Riḍā, *al-wahyū'l-Muḥammadi*, 5th Ed., Cairo, 1375/1955. For a more advanced and progressive view, falling very short of the thesis advanced by me, see Ḥasan Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb, *Fiḡhū'l-Islām*, Cairo, (Sayyid 'alī Ḥāfīz), 1371/1952, especially, pp. 343-end.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to inquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953*, Lahore, 1954. Popularly known as 'The Munir Report'. Discussed in Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, 1957), p. 230 esp. 233.

and goodness are formulations of values larger and more permanent than the individual self. Identification with them inspires men to acts of supreme courage and sacrifice. Our knowledge of the external world is continually expanding. This must be matched by increasing knowledge about our own selves. Never has the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue been truer than today.'

And again, 'Scientific advancement has placed in man's hand the key to the solution of the problems of want and misery. It is now within our power to conquer hunger and disease. It is equally within our power to destroy human society and, indeed, the physical world. Knowledge as such is neutral. Whether our knowledge will be used for destruction or for creative purposes will depend upon the faith which inspires us. Our faith can no longer be based on revelation or mystery, but it must transcend the limitations of the self. A rational understanding of the nature of the external world and of the human personality, toleration for divergent points of view, and imaginative identification with our fellow men through understanding and compassion are the essential ingredients of a faith which alone can sustain our hopes in the troubled and complex world of today.'<sup>1</sup>

A striking testimony to the petrification of free thinking in Islam comes from Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum in *The Jewish Mission*.<sup>2</sup> He is a Progressive Jew, and in defending his position he says that the Jews did not leave the Torah; but the Torah, so far as civil and criminal law are concerned, has ceased to function in the life of modern Jews. 'In Islam, not in Judaism, revelation is conceived as law.' When modern Rabbis say that not a single law can be abrogated, they are more like the *ulema* of Islam than the teachers of Judaism, the Rabbis. He goes on to say that Islam taught a rational civilization to barbaric masses. 'But it does it for a price. Nobody is

<sup>1</sup> 'Faiths for a Complex World' *The American Scholar*, 1957, 419 sq.

<sup>2</sup> London, James Clarke & Co., 94 sqq.

allowed freedom. Islam is religious totalitarianism.' True Judaism cannot do without freedom.

And it is permissible to add that true Islam cannot thrive without freedom of thought in every single matter, in every single doctrine, in every single dogma. Just as Luther broke down the barriers of dogma in Christianity, and Progressive Jewry has sought to bring a reformed Judaism to the Jews, so also Liberal Islam must be recognized and given its place by the orthodox. If orthodoxy is respected by us, how can it be that a liberal interpretation of the faith is considered tantamount to disbelief, *kufr*? It must be firmly asserted, no matter what the *ulema* say, that he who sincerely asserts that he is a Muslim, is a Muslim, and no one has the right to question his beliefs and no one has the right to excommunicate him. That dread weapon the *fatwā* of *takfir* is a ridiculous anachronism. It recoils on the author, without admonishing or reforming the errant soul. Belief is a matter of conscience, and this is the age which recognizes freedom of conscience in matters of faith. What may be said after proper analysis is that a certain person's opinions are wrong, but not that 'he is a *kāfir*'.

Jawaharlal Nehru says: 'We have had great religions and they have had an enormous effect on humanity. Yet, if I may say so with all respect and without meaning any ill to any person, those very religions, in the measure that they made the mind of man static, dogmatic and bigoted, have had, to my mind, an evil effect. The things they said may be good but when it is claimed that the last word has been said, society becomes static.'<sup>1</sup> It is my belief in common with many others that Islam has ceased to be dynamic; it has ceased to lead people in the right direction in these stirring times and a new interpretation of its tenets is an urgent necessity. The challenge should be accepted by Muslims.

<sup>1</sup> 'What is Culture?' *Orient Review*, Vol. 3, 1, 5, May 1957, p. 9.

It must be realized that many religious practices have become lifeless ritual; that large numbers of decent Muslims have ceased to find solace or consolation in prayer and fasting; that decent books on religion are not being written; that women are badly treated economically and morally, and that political rights are denied to them even in fairly advanced countries by the *fatwās* of reactionary *ulema*; that Muslims, even where they constitute the majority in a country, are often economically poor, educationally backward and spiritually bankrupt; that the beneficial laws of early Islam have in many instances fallen behind the times; that the futile attempt to plant an Islamic theocracy in a rising modern country or fashion life after the pattern of early Islam is doomed to failure.

And finally, that the time for heart-searching has come. Islam must be reinterpreted, or else its traditional form will perish.

In a recent issue of the *Illustrated London News*, I read with great emotion: ‘ Yet at this season we are reminded that close on 2,000 years ago, in a far more cruel age even than ours, a poor Jewish woman, taking shelter for the night with her husband in the stable of an overcrowded inn, gave birth to a Child named Jesus, whose life and teaching changed the course of history, and whom those who knew Him best, and countless millions of others since who have received their testimony, believed to have been divine. “ And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The whole teaching of this Man, whether viewed as divine or human — and every recorded act of His life and death underlined that teaching — was that only by love and self-renunciation can men attain to happiness in this world and eternal life in some other. This teaching was partly based on the profound religion and philosophy of the ancient Hebrews, but the greater

part of it was completely new and personal to Jesus Himself. It ran counter to the prevailing belief and practice of every State of the Orient and of the new Mediterranean Empire which was bidding at that moment for universal dominion and which already ruled the whole of the world into which Jesus was born. Its exposition led its lonely teacher to a felon's death of torment and shame on the Cross and the apparent complete triumph of the forces of cruelty, envy, malice and misrepresentation. And in the hour when, crucified in the place called Calvary, true to His life's teaching, Jesus, looking down from the Cross, was heard to murmur, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>1</sup>

And I said to myself, Islam came into the world by the teaching of an Arab living in Mecca. He was a poor man, working for his livelihood. His name was Muhammad. He married an elderly lady, Khadija, who found him faithful and honest. He was gentle, kind and truthful, called *al-amin* by his neighbours. He was given to introspection and used to retire into a cave and pray for days. And at forty the call came. God spoke to him and he spoke to us. The Koran is a testimony of his faith in God. Muhammad was a man like us; but the word was the word of God.

*All Praise to God, the Lord of the worlds,  
The Beneficent, the Merciful,  
Master of the Day of Judgment.  
Thee (alone) do we worship; Thee (alone) do we ask for help.  
Show us the straight path,  
The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;  
Not (the path) of those who earn thy anger nor of those who  
go astray.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Bryant in *Illustrated London News*, December 21, 1957, p. 1068.

<sup>2</sup> Pickthall's rendering of the *Fātiḥa*, with slight changes.

The Prophet spoke to us as a man to men; not as a God to his worshippers. He taught us humility, truthfulness, brotherliness, courage, generosity, fidelity, chivalry. He said, 'O people, hearken to my words and *understand* them. Verily, every Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim. . . And the Prophet said, 'O Lord, have I delivered Thy Message?' and the people said, 'Yes O God'.<sup>1</sup> The Prophet gave us this noble message, honoured be his name. Let us proceed to *understand* it for today, not as it was in the past, nor as it may be in the future.

I believe in God. I believe that the universe is created by God, and that there is order in the universe. The belief in God and the belief in the orderliness of the universe are the two fundamentals of my faith. I believe that Muhammad, blessed be his name, was a Messenger of God, that he was neither greater nor lesser than the other great teachers of the world. 'We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. *We make no distinction* between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.'<sup>2</sup> I am profoundly moved by the teaching of the Upanishads, the Buddha, Moses and Jesus. I respect all religions and faiths. I revere the great doctors of Islam, but do not follow them blindly. My faith is my own, a faith fashioned by my own outlook on life, by my own philosophy, my own experience, my own intuition. I give to every Muslim, and indeed to every man, the right to fashion his own faith — 'To you, your religion; to me, mine.' I do not believe that the Gate of Interpretation is bolted and barred.

<sup>1</sup> The Prophet's Last Sermon, translated literally, *JBBRAS*, 1953, 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Kor.*, II, 136.

I believe that the Koran is a message from God. It is the voice of God heard by Muhammad. Muhammad gave it to us in the words of Muhammad, in the speech of Muhammad, the Arabic language. I believe that in every age, in every clime, these words must be interpreted afresh and understood anew. I believe it is the duty of every Muslim to understand this message for himself. I do revere the great interpreters of Islam, but I crave their indulgence if I cannot fully share their beliefs, for belief is at bottom a matter of individual conscience. I cannot agree that they are the keepers of my conscience.

I believe that law must be separated from religion. I believe that science and religion are discrete things. I believe in truth, beauty and goodness as applied to life. I believe in the virtues of brotherliness, manliness, fidelity, generosity and humility. I believe in prayer, but not in prescribing and enforcing a soulless ritual which has no meaning left in modern life.

As I am a Muslim, I am profoundly affected by the richness and beauty of the 'three languages' of Islam. First, Arabic, and then Persian and Turkish; and all the other languages which sing the praises of the Lord and the love of the Prophet. I am moved by the architecture, the art, the music, the poetry and the craftsmanship of Muslims all over the world. I am aware of a sense of kinship with them which is ever-present in my soul and consciousness. I admire the superb hospitality and the exquisite courtesy of the cultured Muslim. I believe that Islam is a religion for all sorts and conditions of men, for the prince and the beggar, for the ignorant and the learned, for the beginner as well as for al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Khaldūn.

The Prophet once passed by certain people and he greeted them and tarried, and said, 'What are you?' and they said, 'We are believers'. And he said, 'And have you any proof for it?' And they said, 'Yea'. And



he said, 'Bring it'. And they said, 'We thank God in times of prosperity; and we are patient in adversity, and we resign ourselves to our fate.' And the Prophet said, 'Verily then, you are believers'.<sup>1</sup> And I claim to be one of these humble wayfarers by the roadside.

Islam is a religion of humanity — not the ONLY religion of humanity. It is a way of life. It proclaims the unity of God. It honours all the great prophets. Its teachings are derived from Judaism and Christianity; Moses and Jesus are prophets of Islam. It inculcates the love of the Prophet Muhammad. He it was who made the barbaric Arab into a civilized man. He was the most lovable of men. He taught brotherliness, humility, charity, compassion, truth and service. He said he was only a man, not an angel or spirit or God. He was a Messenger of God, not an incarnation.

Islam emphasizes that there is order in the Universe. It lays great stress on truth, beauty and goodness, the Platonic values. As to truth, few civilizations have served science and philosophy as Islam has. It produced a magnificent civilization, translated books from the Greek and Sanskrit, and Islamic science was the father of modern science. As to beauty, it advanced art and music and architecture. As to goodness, it proclaimed and practised the brotherhood of man. It thus paved the way for the modern concept of democracy. It laid the foundations of International Law.

After serving the cause of civilization for some seven centuries, Islam came under a shadow. Its spirit was throttled by fanaticism, its theology was gagged by bigotry, its vitality was sapped by totalitarianism. For the last two centuries efforts are being made to free it from its shackles. It is as if Islam lies imprisoned by a tyrannical government where the writ of *habeas corpus* does not run. Let us release this bright spirit of joy,

<sup>1</sup> *Da'ā'im*, I, 267.

compassion, fraternity, tolerance and reasonableness, and modern man will be the happier for its presence.

The one to whom this volume is dedicated spoke once — and for all time — on Islam and nationalism, and with his burning words we may fitly conclude:

‘I am a Muslim and this thought fills me with pride. The traditions of Islam during its career of thirteen centuries go to form my heritage. I am not willing to give up an iota of this portion. Islamic education, Islamic history, Islamic arts and sciences, Islamic culture, constitute the elements of my wealth; and as a Muslim, it is my duty to preserve it. Being a Muslim, I have a special position in cultural and religious circles, and I cannot bear that anyone should interfere in this inner sanctum of my soul.

‘But, in addition to these feelings, I am also the possessor of another, which has been created by the stark realities of my external life. The soul of Islam is not a barrier to this belief; in fact, it guides me in this path. I am proud to be an Indian. I am an integral part of this unified and impartible nation. The glory of this nation is incomplete without this valuable component. I am an essential factor in its composition and I shall never give up this claim.

‘We brought with us a great treasure and this land was also overlaid with its own untold wealth. We entrusted our wealth to this country; and India opened the flood-gates of its treasures to us. We gave to this country the most precious of our possessions and one which was greatly needed by it. We gave to it the message of democracy and equality.’

*Jammu (Tawi)*

*Apr. 1, 1958 Ram. 13, 137*

## *Maulana Azad and the Sparrows*

WHEN Maulana Azad was a political prisoner in Ahmednagar Fort he wrote a charming essay called *A Story of Sparrows*. It described a flock of sparrows who built their nests, reared their young and pursued all their other lively and noisy social activities in the Maulana's room in the prison. In fact, he and they were jail-birds together.

His account of them is rendered with the grace and wit which usually marked his written and spoken words, and it contains also many shrewd observations on the characters of sparrows which show that, if his inclination had lain that way, he could have become a distinguished naturalist. Had he eschewed politics and resorted instead to nature study, he need not have languished so long in his confined quarters in Ahmednagar Fort, but could have roamed the wide earth in free and happy pursuit of the hobby of bird-watching.

But, of course, if he had done that, he would not have been the Maulana Azad whom his friends admired and loved, and who helped to make history in India. Born in a generation when Indian Independence was to be regained, his patriotic spirit left him no choice but to march in the vanguard with other leaders of India's national movement. One need not regret, but only reflect in passing that his fellow-countrymen's immense gain was a sad loss for sparrows and their kind.

After his release from the tedium of jail life he probably never had time to cast his alert, keen eyes in the direction of wild birds. Especially after he became a member of the Government of India he was constantly occupied by affairs of State; otherwise he would have found Delhi

a congenial place for developing that talent for ornithology which received such a promising first — and probably last — expression in his *Story of Sparrows*. But I like to think that occasionally, as the famous statesman sat relaxing in his garden, his gaze alighted on another well-known resident of the capital, the House Sparrow; and that he then felt a nostalgic sense of friendship towards this replica of his old prison comrades in Ahmednagar Fort. Perhaps, also, he looked with pleasure for a few moments (before hastening away to the next Cabinet meeting) on other creatures who shared his house and garden in those mellow years at the end of his life in the Free India that he had done so much to free. For Delhi counts amongst its population a multitude of beautiful birds.

Many people would be surprised at the numerous different forms of wild life to be met in the capital's prim streets and formal gardens. One of the commonest species is, of course, that to which I myself have the honour to belong — the members of the Diplomatic Corps. There are seven distinct varieties of High Commissioners, 38 different varieties of Ambassadors, and nearly a dozen varieties of Ministers — in addition to the Ministers of the Government, of whom the Maulana himself was an extraordinarily handsome specimen. The diplomats are all excellent Excellencies, with many admirable qualities, though some of their habits are very strange. They can be seen flocking, for example, every evening between six o'clock and eight o'clock at a succession of cocktail parties.

Fortunately, there are no cocktail parties between six o'clock and eight o'clock in the mornings; so I for one am free then to pursue more congenial hobbies. I wander round my garden with a pair of field-glasses, observing some of the other forms of life in the capital. It is remarkable how close this great city — which has been a cultured Imperial capital for a thousand

'years — is to the unregenerate wild, the untamed kingdom of the birds and beasts. My house stands only a few stone's throws from the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Parliament Buildings and the Government Departments, and yet I have seen nine different species of eagles and buzzards in its garden in broad daylight, and often at nights jackals howl beneath its windows.

One of my favourite pastimes is bird-watching. In the last eighteen months I have spotted 120 different kinds of wild birds in or from my garden; and this summer I found more than 100 nests there built by 26 different species. These multitudes of birds visit my flower-beds and shrubberies, and feed, flirt, build their nests and rear young families amongst them regardless of the fact that just beyond the garden wall omnibuses, motor cars, cyclists and pedestrians swarm noisily along King George's Avenue.

Incidentally, some of Delhi's birds are as beautiful as any to be found in the world. Amongst them are exquisite creatures like Golden Orioles, Blossom-headed Parakeets, Hoopoes, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Green Pigeons, White-eyes, Ashy-headed Yellow Wagtails and Golden-backed Woodpeckers. Although my garden has no sheet of water, river birds like Black-bellied Terns, lake birds like Little Cormorants, and swamp birds like Egrets, Herons, Storks and Ibises quite often fly above its lawn. My visitors run the whole gamut of sizes, from gigantic King Vultures and Crested Honey Buzzards to diminutive Whitethroats and Ashy Wren-warblers; and they include birds who build many varied types of nests, whether it be a few sticks thrown together by Turtle Doves, a suspended dome of grasses woven by Purple Sunbirds, a hole in a wall sparsely furnished by Spotted Owlets, two leaves cunningly stitched together by Tailor-birds, or a hammock slung across the fork of a tree by a pair of black Drongoes.

Observing this astonishing variety of creatures day after day, one gets to know intimately many details of

their family lives, and to share in part their avian joys and sorrows. One sees many little dramas, sometimes tragic and at other times comic, which make the pattern of their existences.

For instance, I remember a nest built by a group of Jungle Babblers. One of the many odd habits of these Babblers is that each nest is built, not by a pair of birds, but by a work-party of four or more. Every female concerned presumably then lays her eggs in this communal cradle; and when the chicks are hatched they are fed by the whole collection of parents and foster-parents, who queue up with choice morsels of food carried in their bills, like a line of waiters serving a host of banquetters.

But in the nest that I am writing about things did not happen as usual. I was delighted to see five beautiful, blue-green eggs lying in the nest, and looked forward to watching five chicks hatch in due course and grow steadily in size and strength. However, one youngster appeared two days before any of the others, and it was quite a lusty little monster by the time its baby brothers and sisters emerged from their eggshells. As each of them appeared, this treacherous first-born heaved them over the side of the nest; so that only it survived to tell the tale. Then it threw off its mask, for when its feathers burst from their quills they were not the dull-brown colour proper for a respectable young Babbler, but a biz 're black-and-white. In fact, the youngster was a Red Crested Cuckoo! Its parents had flown all the way from Africa a few weeks earlier to play this trick in a nest in Delhi. Yet the party of Babblers who had built the nest did not seem to recognize the subterfuge, or to mind that they were nourishing the murderer of their own innocent offspring. All four kept queueing up with ever larger insects to nourish it, until the young villain could wave its wings to them in farewell and fly away.

It is charming to watch a family of young fledglings grow up under their parents' tutelage, and at last arrive

at the great moment when they leave their original home and venture into the outer world. One afternoon I watched that scene enacted on the tiny stage of a fragile, cup-like nest belonging to a pair of pretty birds called White-eyes. Two youngsters squatted in the nest. Suddenly one heaved itself on top of the wall of the nest, gave a defiant squawk and flapped its wings. For a few moments it balanced there upcertainly, like a dizzy tight-rope walker on a loose rope, and then fell headlong from its perch and collapsed upside-down in the supporting foliage. At once both its parents appeared as if from nowhere, twittering with concern, fluttering excitedly from twig to twig, and obviously telling their infant to pick itself up and climb back into the nest. The youngster obeyed their command, and the mother and father calmed down.

Now, however, the young White-eye was filled with a restless spirit of adventure. Soon it climbed on to the nest-edge again, wobbled precariously there, and then tumbled once more — but this time back into the nest. Observing the episode, its parents realized the futility of trying to persuade their child to stay in the nursery any longer; it was growing up, it was adolescent, it had got ambitions. So they hopped and fussed in the branches round the nest, calling encouragingly now to the youngster to have another try. It responded with right goodwill, but with many wrong gestures. I need not describe how, by a process of trial and error, the chick at last learned to keep its balance on the nest-edge, and to stagger safely to a twig six inches away. The process took a whole enthralling, agonizing, triumphant ten minutes, during much of which time my heart was in my mouth, for I feared that the utterly incompetent-looking fledgling would crash to destruction on the ground many feet below.

Meanwhile, the second youngster sat motionless in the nest, apparently indifferent to the great event taking

place. But now its turn came. The parents called to it, and at once it stirred and struggled to the lip of the nest. I wanted to stay and follow its fortunes, but at that tantalising moment important diplomatic duty intervened. Looking at my watch, I noticed that it was time for me to join the flock of Ambassadors gathering at Palam Airport to meet the Prime Minister of Japan, who was to arrive twenty minutes later as an honoured guest of the Indian Government. So I turned tail and fled. But when I looked into my garden an hour later, I found both the young White-eyes perched side by side on a branch two feet above their nest, looking very pleased with themselves and receiving vociferous congratulations from their parents.

Often in bird life the end of the story is different. Once upon a time I was watching a Green Pigeon's nest high in a tree. Its two eggs had just hatched, and the mother pigeon sat contentedly on a couple of new-born babes. It seemed to be the beginning of a happy family life — but suddenly a shadow darted amongst the branches of the tree and settled on the tree-trunk just below the nest. I saw that it was a Tree-Pie, a handsome, gaily-plumaged, swashbuckling member of the tribe of Crows who dearly loves to eat a day-old chick! It began to stab its dagger-like beak through the floor of the nest from below, greedy for the tender young pigeon-flesh above. At once the mother pigeon raised a cry of alarm, and the father pigeon flew from a neighbouring tree. He assaulted the perpetrator of the unprovoked aggression, and drove him away. All seemed to be peaceful and well again.

But as I sat sipping tea that afternoon on my verandah I heard again the Green Pigeon's sudden cry of distress; and I ran to see what was afoot. The Tree-Pie was back on the tree-trunk below the nest, jabbing its beak through the nest's undersurface. The two young Pigeons lay in the nest, and on the nest stood the embattled mother



Pigeon, leaning over its edge and trying to strike at the uninvited intruder. Alas, the father Pigeon was nowhere in sight; he must have been otherwise engaged elsewhere. For the next two minutes I watched a terrible duel. The Tree-Pie kept dodging the Pigeon's blows, and at the same time continued trying to tear a hole in the nest through which to extract its prey. The Pigeon got more and more desperately angry, and leaned ever further beyond the nest-edge in attempts to stab its enemy. I think that the Tree-Pie deliberately moved gradually further out of reach, to tempt the Pigeon to crane its neck too far. If that was the purpose, it succeeded. The beautiful, enraged Pigeon suddenly lost her balance and fell from the nest. Instantly the Tree-Pie swooped at her and grappled with her — and the two birds fluttered to the ground clawing and biting each other in deadly combat as they descended. I heard a short scuffle in the undergrowth, and then I saw the Tree-Pie dart up to the nest again, alight on its rim, poke its head cruelly into the pigeons' nursery, and fly away with two helpless chicks dangling from its bill.

There is no end to the variety of incidents which occur in bird society in my garden. For example, I once saw a Tawny Eagle alight at the entrance to a cavity in a jacaranda tree which had been wrenched open in a thunderstorm. The place had long been the nest-hole of many hundreds of wild-bees. Now the bees swarmed out of their fortress like squadrons of Lilliputian aeroplanes, and began to attack the Eagle all over its head and neck and shoulders. But the huge bird-of-prey, well armoured with feathers, did not care a rap for these pinpricks. It tore with its beak at the wood inside the tree-trunk, and eventually extracted a large, waxy, luscious cake of bees' eggs. This booty it took to a neighbouring tree, where it demolished the delicacy with evident relish. The bees buzzed round helplessly for several minutes and then philosophically

flew away; and the cavity in the jacaranda tree was empty and silent for the first time for many months. But not for long. Half-an-hour later I saw a pair of impertinent Common Mynahs enter the hole with an odd assortment of nesting material carried in their beaks. These cheerful and clownish birds have a very vulgar taste in architecture, favouring silver chocolate paper, cellophane tissue off cigars, bits of rag and all sorts of other rubbish picked up from Delhi's streets for the decoration of their homes.

A naturalist in my garden, or in any other garden in Delhi, need not confine his attentions to birds. Many other charming creatures live in my two-acre plot of lawn, flower-beds, vegetable patches and shrubberies. Amongst them are chipmunks, lizards, mice, toads, flying-foxes, bats and a confusing assortment of butterflies and insects. Their private lives are endlessly intriguing.

And several Rikki-tikki-tavis protect my family and me from less desirable visitors. Sometimes as I sit working in my study in the garden a mongoose strolls through the door, ambles inquisitively round the room, sniffs the air suspiciously as it approaches me, takes umbrage at my human smell, and trots discreetly out again.

These are some of the attractive animals whom Maulana Azad might have immortalized in his distinguished prose, if he had decided to study natural history instead of making Indian history. As it is, his solitary essay on Sparrows deserves to hold a permanent place in Indian literature. And if those birds — or their descendants — knew that a memorial volume to him was being published, they would certainly wish to join in paying homage to their old comrade of the days of the Freedom Struggle in Ahmednagar Fort. So on their behalf I have written this note.

## *The Sunbirds' Nest*

MAULANA SAHIB was a man of wide-ranging intellectual interests; and this is illustrated by his careful study of the habits of the common Sparrow during one of his terms of imprisonment. So I think it unnecessary to offer any apology for telling a brief story of a pair of Sunbirds and their nest as a small tribute to the memory of one who knew that the truly great mind finds joy and peace in things that may to some seem trivial.

During the days of the Maulana's final illness and death, I happened to be staying with friends in a New Delhi house within a few hundred yards of his residence. As soon as I walked out from my room on to the verandah, I saw just opposite me the partly-made nest of a Purple Sunbird, attached to a hanging rope. It was not a very convenient place from the point of view of the nesting bird; for, whenever people sat on the verandah, they were inevitably within a few feet of the nest, and the little bird obviously did not much like having human beings at quite such close quarters. It would come suddenly out of the trees with a mouthful of nesting material; hover rather doubtfully near to the nest, settle in a great hurry, push its newly-gathered material into the nest and dash off again, as if saying to itself: 'Really, these human beings are most inconsiderate. How can they expect me to build a decent nest while they are sitting there gossiping and startling me with their sudden movements.' So, it must be admitted, a good deal of the nesting material fell to the ground under the nest, and that part of the verandah became very untidy. And that leads one to comment on the very curious

circumstance that, although birds seem to be very clever in finding suitable material for their nests all over the place, they never seem to think of searching the ground immediately under the nest. Once they have dropped a bit of nesting material, they seem to say to themselves that it has gone for ever, and cannot be retrieved. I remember reading long ago an account by the well-known English writer, W. H. Hudson, who watched a colony of Jackdaws building their nests. They dropped lots of sticks on to the ground. But for days they never picked any up. Then one day an unconventional bird, perhaps one of these dangerous radical innovators, suddenly spied a great pile of sticks on the ground under the nests. Down he came, and he was soon followed by the other birds, till they had used up all the dropped sticks. Then they went foraging again, and soon there was a new pile. They never repeated the labour-saving device of picking up the lost sticks. Probably there is an avian convention against labour-saving devices.

But to return to our Sunbirds. Happily there were many hours in the day when no human beings interfered with their labours. So the nest grew apace. As I passed it, I could now see the beautiful little cup-shaped entrance platform. Only the dome and the lining remained to be built. Although I had watched closely once or twice, without alarming the bird, I could not see how she wove the strands of grass together. She just did a little prodding here and a little prodding there, and then off she flew for fresh material. And yet, somehow, those few strokes of the bill had woven the material tightly together. The most delicate of instruments could hardly have made a better job of it. For, in fact, her bill is the most delicate of instruments.

I have written 'her bill'. Earlier on, I wrote of 'their nest'. Who builds the nest, he or she or they? In this case, I must confess that all the hard labour was done by the lady working alone. Not that her husband was

indifferent. Frequently I heard his sweet and vigorous song coming from a short distance. More than once, whilst she was actually at work on the nest, he would suddenly come swooping down on to a neighbouring rope, shout out a bar of vigorous song, and then rush away again. What did his song signify to his hard-working wife? It would be nice to think that she was stimulated and refreshed at the sound of his voice. Maybe she was. But the song came so suddenly and so loud that it sounded to my human ears almost more like a male voice shouting out: 'Hi, you lazy woman, cannot you work a bit faster?' But who am I to interpret the secret language of the birds?

One day, some visitors came to call, and we sat down on the verandah to a cup of mid-morning coffee. I was just opening my mouth to say: 'Did you notice the Sunbird's nest?', when the words froze on my lips. The nest had gone. Was I perhaps looking at the wrong rope? I gazed wildly round. Alas, no! It was all too true. The rope was free of nest; the ground below was swept tidy. There was nothing to be seen of the birds. Soon the whole household was alerted. What could have happened? Probably the truth will never be known. Better so, perhaps. Of course, there was a story of how the nest had fallen down. That I knew was not true. Probably if I had been responsible for keeping the verandah tidy each day I should have felt rather disgusted with the birds; I might even have decided that they would do better to nest a little further from human habitations. However, whoever it may have been who had decided to clear away the mess, including the nest, they soon knew that such clearances were unpopular in this particular household. Nor, in fact, did the birds take the hint. Birds can be as pig-headed as any human being on the subject of 'There's no place like home'. They hate being driven to a more commodious dwelling place just as much as refugees and other perverse-minded humans.

Next morning, when I went on to the verandah, it was quite clear that the determined little bird had begun work again. Several strands were already woven into the old place. She perhaps wanted to lay some eggs rather soon. There again is a mystery. How long can birds delay the laying of their eggs if the nest is not ready? Who knows what strange laws can precipitate or delay these inner developments, according to outward circumstances? But that there can be a good deal of delay or of hastening seems almost certain from the evidence of what one sees going on when some such mishap as this overtakes the nest-building operation. Anyhow, she built fast and furiously this time. I left the house when the nest was only three days old; but already it had reached the stage at which it had disappeared before. And there my story ends; for I have not been again to see the later stages. By now, a month later, I hope the eggs are laid and all is going well. Little bird, your choice of a site for your nest could hardly be expected to suit a tidy-minded sweeper. But it suited me very well.

## *Ptolemaic Error*

IN SPITE of the failure of successive explorers, the ambition to climb the mountain peaks of High Truth and things spiritual will not be given up. The urge in the human mind to grasp the ultimate Truth survives every failure. It is part of the physiology of man not to accept defeat and rest content with agnosticism.

The egocentricity of human evaluations is the besetting sin that leads us to error in this exploration into the Infinite. Too often we see pious men and women landing themselves in a violent revolt against the object of their life-long reverence and devotion, when faced with grief and unbearable pain. The intensity of their previous faith is converted into a contrary violence of negation. This is understandable. The attitude of an angry son against his father is repeated in the relation of man to God. And as the predicated parent is unseen, anger takes the shape of violent denial and total materialism.

The Ptolemaic astronomers made the earth the centre round which all the heavenly bodies revolved. To them the earth-centre was the most obvious basic fact. In the same way, man measures things round his own satisfaction and it appears to be the obviously right thing to do. In spite of all the modern knowledge of the infinite vastness of the universe of matter, man's sense of joy and satisfaction continues to be the centre of all his evaluations. It would be all too easy to put the error into an Aesopian fable and show how unscientific it is to judge the universe, its structure or its management, by the pleasurable reactions or the opposite of one of the myriad species on this planet. It would be the grossest

deviation from mathematical rectitude, if we may coin such a phrase. Not even all the denizens of the earth are brought into the evaluating measure. Man and man alone sits as juror over God and among the species of the earth, he is perhaps the least qualified to be called just. Luckily man's mind is capable of seeing his own fallacy. It can see that making itself the centre is faulty, in spite of the overwhelming emotions that cloud the truth. We can perceive in spite of the inherent defect of egoism that our notion of 'justice' is based on human feelings and it is as erroneous to apply it to an examination of the universe and its properties as it would be to allot colours to numbers or to measure ideas by the pound avoirdupois.

To take a very obvious instance of the fault involved in such a process, is it just to deprive the wild animals of their forests and jungles and convert them into arable land? Is it just to the tigers, panthers and elephants? We find that justice as we understand it is entirely man-centred and in a universe even only as our telescopes know it, it is not a well-centred or justly founded process of appraisement.

Not that we object to the play of human intellect from its own point of view: all that is sought to be shown is that it is a fallacy to infer truth and untruth from the delusions arising from egocentred vision. *Dharma* is certainly the basis on which human life must be founded, but we cannot make a ladder of it to scale the height of all truth which extends far, far beyond man's world and its laws and rules of behaviour. Truth is not a doctrine of human expediency or utilitarianism. It is a totally different thing. It is as independent of man's particular reactions to it as a mathematical problem is amoral.



## *The Constitution of India*

THE CONSTITUTION of a country embodies both its past history and its future aspirations. The Constitution of India was not written on a clean slate. The Constitution was the result not of a bloody revolution but the peaceful transfer of power from the British Government to the people of India. And the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic, gave to itself the Constitution.

Before the Constitution, the Government of India Act 1935 was the Constitution Act. It conferred a truncated form of responsible Government upon the Provinces, but at the Centre the Governor-General, acting with his Executive Council, still remained all-powerful. Throughout the Act there are clear indications of the distrust of the people, of democratic institutions, of undue emphasis on the rights of minorities and of maintenance in British hands of all those matters which would ensure the continuance of British rule in India. Although it was intended that the Constitution should be Federal, the Federal provisions of the Act never came into operation, as the Indian States kept out of the Constitutional Scheme and continued to be independent, subject to the paramountcy exercised by the Viceroy as the representative of the King.

The Government of India Act was itself a fairly detailed Constitution; and in our Constitution we find many provisions which are reproduced from the Act. As the governance of India did not represent a clear and complete break from the past, the administrative machinery inherited from the British had to be continued and provisions similar to those found in the Government of

India Act had to be made in the Constitution. But for the drafting of the Constitution, the Constitutions of various countries had to be studied and there are traces in the Constitution of the influence of this study. To a very large extent, however, the Constitution is based on the British and the American model.

The American example has been followed in the most important respect in making the Constitution the supreme law of the land. All authorities must function under it and be loyal to it. This is an important departure from the British Constitution where Parliament is sovereign and can pass any law — the only limits to its sovereignty being those of practicability and reasonableness. An important consequence follows from this: If the Constitution is supreme, the Executive and the Legislature must be kept within the constitutional bounds and must not be permitted to transgress the limits set by the Constitution. This function has been assigned to the Judiciary. In England, however important the Judiciary is and however high its traditions, it must bow before the sovereign Parliament. It has no right to consider the competence of Parliament to pass any law or to consider the constitutionality of any law. In the U.S. and India, the position is entirely different. The Judiciary in America and in our country have been armed with the powerful weapon of judicial review. It can scrutinize every law passed by Parliament or the State Legislature to determine its constitutionality and if the Legislature has exceeded its powers or overstepped its limits, the Act can be declared void and inoperative.

The British model has been followed in setting up the governmental machinery both at the Centre and in the States. The system of Government is responsible Government and not the Presidential system which obtains in America. The Executive is drawn from the Legislature itself and depends for its existence upon the confidence that the Legislature has in it. There are virtues and vices

in both the systems. In responsible Government, the Executive is more sensitive to public opinion and, perhaps, more truly reflects it. The irremovable executive gives to Government greater strength and permanence although it makes it possible for the Executive completely to ignore a hostile public opinion. The British Parliamentary system which we have adopted has not succeeded in every country or climate. In France a large number of splinter groups has made it impossible for a Ministry to last for more than a few months, reducing that country into a state of chronic Cabinet crisis and dismal failure to concentrate on any long-term plan of political reform or economic development. In India, on the other hand, there is the danger of one-Party Government. For Parliamentary Government to succeed, a strong opposition and an alternative Government are essential. India at present lacks both. But in her present political and economic development it is just as well that that is so. The Congress, which is the Party in power, has inherited the traditions of the freedom struggle and is essentially the Party of the people because it was the only national organization before our Independence which had the following of large masses of the people. It, therefore, understands the needs of the people and can sympathize with its sufferings. Fortunately, the leader of the Congress, our Prime Minister, is a true democrat and will never permit the one-Party rule to degenerate into a tyranny which is the worst tyranny of all, viz., a broad-based tyranny supported by popular suffrage. We have got to get things done quickly in India and we have no time for the rise and fall of Parties and the change of leaders and policies. But when we have solved all our most urgent problems, undoubtedly we must start thinking of the dangers that lurk in a system which equates a Party with the State.

One of the most interesting and important features of our Constitution is Part III which contains what is called

**Fundamental Rights.** These are rights guaranteed to all citizens and, in some cases, even to those who are not citizens. These rights are to be looked upon as inalienable rights of an individual which every human being is entitled to enjoy if he is to maintain his human dignity. They deal with equality before law, prohibition against discrimination on grounds of opportunity in matters of public employment, right of freedom of speech and expression, right to form associations or unions, right to acquire, hold or dispose of property, right to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business, right not to be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to procedure, established by law, right to freedom of conscience and to freely profess and practise religion, right to one's own culture and to study in any educational institutions, and right to be paid compensation for compulsory acquisition of property.

In the modern complex society, a conflict always arises between the rights of the individual and the security and interest of the State. When the State pursued a *laissez-faire* policy, the individual was left alone to pursue his own path and to manage his own affairs. But if the State is to be a Welfare State as ours, as will be pointed out later, intends to be, then inevitably there must be more and more encroachment upon the rights and activities of the individual. The most difficult problem of today is to draw the proper line between these two conflicting claims and to ensure that the all-powerful State does not overstep this line. It may be said that in every case the rights of the individual must be subordinated to the social good. On the other hand, it may be equally cogently argued that the social good is determined by the State and that what the State thinks to be the social good may not necessarily be the social good as envisaged by all the individuals inhabiting the State. It may also be argued that there are certain individual rights which are so fundamental and on which depends the very dignity

of the human soul that no interest of the State or even the security of the State can be permitted to violate these basic rights.

Our Constitution has tried to solve this difficult problem in a very practical and, on the whole, satisfactory manner. The Legislature has been given the power to make laws which may contravene these fundamental rights if the contravention is in the interest of public order, security of the State, public morality or maintenance of friendly relations with foreign States. The Judiciary through the High Courts in the States and the Supreme Court at the Centre, are constituted the custodians of these fundamental rights. Whether the restrictions imposed by the Legislature upon fundamental rights are reasonable restrictions or not is made a justiciable issue, and, by making it justiciable, the Constitution has placed in the hands of the Judiciary tremendous powers. It is not possible to deprive the citizens of any of their fundamental rights by a majority in the Legislature. The Legislature is controlled by the Judiciary and every citizen has been given the right to challenge any legislation which attempts to deprive him of any of these rights and it is ultimately for the Judiciary to determine whether the challenge is justified or not.

It has been urged with considerable force that this power of judicial review may act as a serious impediment to important social and economic legislation which India may desire to carry through in order to achieve its objective of a Welfare State. It has been pointed out that Courts of Law tend to be technical and may invalidate legislation on narrow theoretical grounds overlooking the larger public good and, therefore, regret has been expressed in certain quarters that our Constitution did not establish the sovereignty of Parliament and make Parliament the custodian of fundamental rights rather than the Judiciary, because it is urged that Parliament is the best judge of what legislation is necessary and to what

extent legislation should trespass upon individual rights. But our Constitution-makers felt, and rightly felt, that it would be dangerous at the very inception of the new State to give uncontrolled power of legislation to the Legislatures. It was realized that for a long time to come only one Party would be in power with hardly any opposition and that democracy in India might have been imperilled if a single Party was given the power to ride roughshod over individual rights and to ignore the protests of those who did not belong to that Party. Therefore, even at the risk of slowing down the progress of the country, in the interests of freedom and democracy, an independent impartial authority was constituted to act as the arbitrator between the individual and the State and to adjudicate upon the rights and liberties of the former and the security and the interests of the latter.

It was essential that such an authority should be completely independent of the Legislature and the Executive and that its integrity and impartiality should be beyond question and should be accepted by the public at large. Therefore, the Constitution has set up a Judiciary, both in the High Courts and in the Supreme Court, which is irremovable and which is in no way controlled by the Legislature or the Executive. The rights and privileges of the Judiciary form part of the Constitution and they cannot be altered or affected by any law passed by the Legislature.

The usual question that is asked about every Constitution is whether it is federal or unitary. Our Constitution is neither federal nor unitary, although it has important features of both. In form it is unitary, because the Constitution sets up a Union of States. The past history of India clearly indicates the importance of a strong Central Government and the danger that lies in fissiparous tendencies coming to the top. But it would be difficult to govern India from the Centre and to deal with all the manifold problems that arise for solution and

which have their own local features and which vary from State to State. Therefore, a certain amount of decentralization was inevitable. The different States in India, having large areas — sometimes larger than European countries — and also having large populations, had to be invested with powers which would make it possible for the administration to be run without too much interference from the Centre. Therefore, our Constitution while retaining some of the essential features of a unitary Government has also adopted those aspects of a federal Government which help to constitute the States into fairly autonomous and independent units.

One of the important characteristics of a federal polity is a dual citizenship and also a dual judiciary — one set of judges enforcing the State laws and the other federal laws. Neither of these features is present in our Constitution. The citizen owes allegiance only to the Union of India, and, although there are High Courts in the States, the Judiciary is one and integrated. It enforces both State and Union laws. The Supreme Court at Delhi is the apex of the different Courts in the country and is not only a Federal Court but also the highest Court of Appeal.

A novel machinery has been devised with regard to the legislative functions of the State Legislatures and the Union Legislature. There is a Union List, a State List and a Concurrent List. The residual powers of legislation are with the Union Parliament. In the Constitutions of the United States of America and Australia, we find the enunciation of the true federal principle in that the legislative power of the Federation is strictly defined and all the residuary powers are left to the States. In Canada, the opposite principle has been accepted. The history of the United States of America shows that independent States surrendered part of their powers in order to set up a Federation and, therefore, the powers which they did not surrender continued to remain with

the States. In India we had no such problem. The provinces under the British rule never claimed to possess any independent powers. In the powers that they exercised, they were really the delegates of the Central Government and they were asked to discharge various functions as a result of the policy of decentralization. Therefore, when the States were set up under the Constitution, only such powers were conferred upon them as were considered necessary and which were not likely to endanger national interests.

The device of a Concurrent List is a novel one and helps the Union Legislature to bring about uniformity even in matters where the State Legislature has the legislative powers. Under that List both the State Legislature and the Union Legislature may cover the same legislative field, but the legislation passed by the Union Legislature prevails over the State legislation. The Union Legislature has been given wide powers to legislate even with regard to matters which are included in the State List. Parliament has the power to legislate with respect to a matter in the State List in the national interests and also if there is a proclamation of emergency.

An important feature of every Federal Constitution is a bicameral legislature. The Lower Chamber represents the people and the Upper Chamber the constituent States. In India we have adopted the bicameral system but not with its federal characteristics. The House of the People, i.e., the Lower House, is elected on the basis of adult suffrage, and, in the Council of States, the States are not equally represented but according to their population. An interesting feature is the nomination of 12 members by the President to represent literature, science, art and social service.

Only the important States have the bicameral system and the electorate for their Upper Chamber consists of local authorities, graduates, teachers and members of the Lower Chamber, i.e., the Legislative Assembly.



'There is also a provision for nomination to represent literature, science, art, the co-operative movement and social service. There is a provision for abolition by Parliament of the Upper Chamber of a State having such a Council or for the creation of such a Council in the States having no such Council, if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting.

There is a feeling that an Upper Chamber is an unnecessary luxury. On the other hand, an Upper Chamber can play a very important role in legislation. It can be a revising Chamber and it can bring maturer consideration to bear upon the legislation passed by the Lower Chamber. It can also make use of the talents of elder statesmen who may not be prepared to face the heat and dust of an electioneering campaign. The provision for the Ministers, who are members of one Chamber, to have the right of audience in the other Chamber does away with considerable inconvenience caused by the rigid bicameral system.

We have advisedly made our Constitution very flexible. As the Constitution is very elaborate and detailed, it would have been a mistake to make it rigid and to have made the amendment of its provisions difficult. The amendment of the Constitution may be brought about by the vote of a majority of the total membership of each House of Parliament and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of each House present and voting. With regard to certain Articles, which deal with the federal aspects of the Constitution and also with both the Union and State Judiciary, the amendment also requires to be ratified by the Legislatures of not less than one-half of the States by resolutions to that effect being passed by those Legislatures.

For historical reasons, the States were divided into Part A, Part B and Part C States. It is unnecessary to consider the Part D State which only consists of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Constitution applies to Part B States with certain modifications and, although there is only one Article which deals with Part B States, this fact is apt to make the students of the Constitution overlook the revolution that was effected in the creation of Part B States. When the United Kingdom transferred power to India, it left a very difficult problem to be solved by the Indian Government. There were many Indian States ruled by Maharajas or Nawabs who had treaty relations with the United Kingdom and who, subject to the paramountcy of the United Kingdom, were practically independent. We were, therefore, left with a situation similar to what Mazzini and Cavour had to face in Italy, namely, the unification of India and the integration of these States into the Indian polity.

In my opinion, one of the greatest achievements of the Indian Government after Independence was the repainting of the map of India and repainting it in such a manner as to show the whole country in one colour on the map of the world. The map of India in British times was a sort of a mosaic with yellow dots all over showing different Indian Princely States. The first task was to bring about federations of small States so as to have only a few large States to deal with and, after that was done, to induce the large States to enter into the Indian Union. This object was successfully achieved. But the States had reached different stages of democratic evolution and, therefore, special arrangements had to be made for their governance. Instead of a Governor as in the A States of India, a Rajpramukh, who was one of the Rulers, was appointed as the Head of each one of the Part B States. It is now felt that the time has come when the difference between Part A States and Part B States should be done away with and the recent reorganization of the States has

brought about complete uniformity between the two types of States. Now the Constitution will apply in the same manner to all the States in India.

Part C States were States which, for special reasons, had to be administered by the President acting through a Chief Commissioner or a Lieutenant Governor to be appointed by him. Most of these also have now been integrated into the other States of India and the distinction made in the Constitution is no longer of any substance.

The Constitution, to my mind, is only a machinery through which the State achieves its goal or, what Socrates called, the good life. A Constitution may contain all the trappings of democracy — it may have a legislature elected through adult suffrage; it may have Ministers responsible to that Legislature; it may have a strong Judiciary — and even so the Constitution may achieve nothing if it is not worked for a definite purpose and in order to achieve a specific goal.

The goal of our country is set out in unmistakable terms in the Preamble of the Constitution and that is to secure to all its citizens social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and of opportunity, and to promote among the citizens fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. It can be definitely stated that the Constitution does achieve political democracy, but, what is equally important, is to achieve social and economic democracy.

With regard to the future economy of our country, our Prime Minister has stated in unmistakable terms that our object is to have a socialistic pattern of society, and, with regard to social democracy, our recent legislation clearly indicates that we wish to bring about equality between the two sexes, to remove the stigma from the lower classes and to create a casteless society.

Most of these desiderata cannot be achieved by the Constitution; they can only be achieved by the Legislatures in the States and by Parliament. The Constitution itself has, however, given clear and unmistakable guidance to the Legislatures. Part IV of the Constitution contains directive principles of State policy. This is an unusual feature in a Constitution because it has clearly stated that the provisions contained in this Part shall not be enforceable by any court. It contains, as it were, moral precepts and imposes a moral, if not legal, duty upon the State to apply the principles contained in this Part in making laws. If all these principles were carried out, our country would indeed be a heaven on earth. India would then be not only a democracy in the political sense, but also a Welfare State looking after the welfare of its citizens — a State in which there will be economic equality between its different citizens and in which everyone would have the same opportunity to educate oneself, to work and to reap the reward of one's labour.

These directive principles provide that the citizens have the right to adequate means of livelihood; that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment; that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. They also provide that the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want. They also lay down that the State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way, to all workers — agricultural, industrial or otherwise — work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full

enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. These directive principles lay down a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution within which the State shall provide for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

It would be an interesting study to consider the legislation that has been passed by the different Legislatures in the States and by Parliament and to find out to what extent this legislation has been imbued with the spirit of these directive principles. An impartial student will come to the conclusion that, in the few years that have elapsed since the Constitution was passed, India has made rapid progress in carrying out, if not in full, to a very large extent the precepts that the Constitution-makers placed before the Legislatures.

The most important aspect of our Constitution is that it sets up a secular State. We have no State religion and all religions are treated alike in our country. As already pointed out, freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion is guaranteed and every office, from the highest to the lowest, is open to members of every community. Equal care is taken to see that there is no discrimination against any linguistic section in the country. India is a land of many religions and languages, and, diverse as its many cultures may seemingly appear, there runs through all of them the golden thread of unity. It is to strengthen and consolidate this unity that the Constitution-makers have made various provisions.

In the ultimate analysis a Constitution must be judged by what it helps the country to achieve. It is true that, although the Constitution has been in existence for about eight years, it has already undergone some changes. But, like every other institution in the world, even a Constitution must be tested by the system of trial and error. On the one hand, people must feel a certain amount

of sanctity for the Constitution of the country. On the other hand, if the Constitution contains provisions which prevent the country becoming a Welfare State and bringing about a socialistic pattern of society, then those provisions, however reluctantly, must be altered. However sacred a Constitution may be, the good and welfare of the people is even more sacred, and, if the Constitution is altered at all, it is altered by a national Parliament elected through adult suffrage and we should be loth to take the view that such a Parliament does not truly represent the views of the people.

A. R. WADIA

## *The Sociology of Languages*

WHEN THE IDEA was mooted that a volume of essays written in honour of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad be presented to him on his seventieth birthday, it was not dreamt by any one that the cruel hand of death would transform this birthday gift into a memorial volume. Destiny drew him into politics and made him an eminent political leader, but at heart he remained a profound scholar, a master of three languages, Urdu, Persian and Arabic, never so much at home as in the midst of his books and writing on topics of deep religious and human import. Though he was not given to speaking English, he could understand it, and no political leader was more alive to the importance of English and the historic role it has played in the development of Indian nationalism and patriotism than Maulana Azad. As Minister of Education he could have done a lot to disentangle the linguistic tangle of India, but unfortunately constitutional restrictions hampered him and thwarted the fulfilment of his own cherished ideas. With this background it is but fit that I should like to dedicate this essay on the language problem in India to his memory.

Language in its most developed forms is a priceless creation of man. Perhaps it is his most valuable possession and for that very reason the correct sociological approach is to look upon it as a servant of man and not as his master. It has always been a matter of slow evolution and no language can claim to have been born perfect or complete. Its evolution has marked his progress and in the evolution of human civilization languages have grown, decayed and even died, though not without leaving their

impress behind in their offshoots. The task of unravelling this process constitutes perhaps the greatest charm of philology. Take the case of Sanskrit. Its alphabet is well-nigh perfect, its grammar clear and precise, its sonorosity still fascinating. Its literature has very few equals and has not been surpassed by any. As the language of the Vedas, it has been venerated as being divine. But all these great qualities have not prevented changes in it, marking the evolution of Indian culture. Vedic Sanskrit developed into classical Sanskrit for the scholar and Prakrit as the language of the masses. Pali was its best known form and when Buddha wanted to give expression to his message he found the correct medium to be, not Vedic or classical Sanskrit, but Pali, the spoken language of the people. Even by Buddha's time Sanskrit had become a dead language, not in the sense that it was forgotten but in the sense that it was not in common use. It had become too high-brow for the man in the street. But this does not mean that it became useless. It continued to be the language of the learned and was utilized as the unifying bond of Hindu culture. It was the language through which the Malayalee Sankaracharya wrote and spoke to Indians in the north and east and west. The Tamilian Ramanujacharya found in it the best medium to preach his Vaishnavism and so did the Kannadiga Madhvacharya. It still continues to be the language of the pandits whether in north or south India, when they meet in philosophic conferences or religious gatherings. It is still the pride of Hindu culture, for all Hindu culture centres in it. Nevertheless it is no more a living, growing language. In the Census taken in 1951 we find only 509 giving Sanskrit as their mother tongue in East India, 28 in West India and 18 in Central India. These figures give us a total of 555 for the whole of India. Of course, there may be lakhs who know it academically. Now that the language problem looms so large in India today, a few people have sought refuge in asking for



Sanskrit as the national language of India, but they have no idea of what they are talking about, and Sanskrit can never hope to be the language of the Indian Parliament or of the market-place. That a dead language can be revived has been illustrated by the Republic of Israel. But in numbers they are few and their religious and political zeal has given an impetus to the revival of Hebrew. But such a revival is not possible in India with her teeming millions and her multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-linguistic areas. Sanskrit has been performing one great service right through the centuries: it has been the reservoir on which all Indian languages have drawn for words. This is true not only of the Sanskritic languages like Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati, but of Telugu and Kannada and Malayalam. There are a few Indians who can write in Sanskrit today, but it is questionable whether their Sanskrit will live as literature. It is a *tour de force* which can evoke our admiration without touching our hearts.

The history of Avesta shows a similar development. It was not merely a dead language but even a forgotten language in the sense that its very meaning had been lost. It was only the genius of Anquetil du Perron that brought out the relationship of Avesta to Sanskrit as a sister language, and Avesta has come to be understood mainly through Sanskrit. Its evolution into Pahlavi, old Persian and modern Persian shows the general trend of linguistic development.

The history of Latin also throws a great deal of light on linguistic development. As the language of the Romans it kept pace with the triumphs of the Roman arms. It may not have been possible for it to have replaced the various languages in the outlying parts of the mighty Roman Empire, however crude and undeveloped these languages may have been. But Latin words did get themselves introduced and new languages cropped up as French, Spanish and Portuguese. Even on its own

native soil it gave place to Italian. But for some centuries Latin continued to be the language of the learned in Europe. In fact, at a time when distances were real and the very existence of different numerous national languages precluded the possibility of mutual intercourse, Latin played a useful unifying role and became the vehicle of European consciousness. It became the fashion for writers in all countries of Europe to write in Latin as giving them a wider reading public. Even so great a writer as Lord Bacon, who has won an undying place in the history of English literature, was not averse to writing in Latin. If he preferred to write his *Essays* in English for the benefit of his countrymen, as a philosopher he preferred to write his *Novum Organum* and *De Augmentis Scientiarum* in Latin and justified himself by writing: 'I am trying to produce some philosophical works which may be read all over the world, especially in the lettered world of Europe, but if I write in the English dialect, very few will understand it and that is why I am writing in Latin'. So for Bacon, English was only a dialect. The *Paradise Lost* of Milton ranks as one of the greatest epics in English literature, but it is interesting to note that Milton was hesitating whether he should write his great poem in Latin or English. It is questionable whether he would have figured as a great poet, in line with Virgil and Horace, if he had written in Latin. But in English he has carved out for himself a unique place in the hearts of Englishmen. This is abundantly proved not only by his epics but by his *Lycidas*, a great elegy in English, while his *Epitaphium Damonis*, written in Latin to celebrate the death of his greatest friend, Charles Diodati, has only earned the tribute that 'no Englishman has written more correct or more beautiful Latin verse'. His political pamphlets in Latin are hardly read, while his *Areopagitica* is a classic in sonorous English.

It is interesting to note that four centuries earlier, Dante in Italy had faced the same dilemma. Milton: should

he write his *Divina Comedia* in Latin or Italian? He did write his philosophical classic *De Monarchia* in Latin, but when it came to writing a great poem he hesitated and ultimately wrote in Italian to the permanent enrichment of Italian literature. After all, Italian was the language in which he spoke and loved, while Latin had the aroma only of midnight oil. One of the greatest philosophical works, Spinoza's *Ethica*, was written in Latin, as Spanish was not considered good enough for expressing high philosophical thought.

Right down till the 17th century, Latin was the symbol of the cultural unity of Europe. It still plays this role in the religious ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church and to a lesser extent in national churches like the Church of England. It still pervades the ceremonial functions of European Universities. Degrees are still conferred in Latin. Priests of the Roman Catholic Church in their educational centres for their own training still use Latin as a medium of conversation and teaching to overcome the difficulty of dealing with people who have different mother tongues. These are but a few survivals, to use a biological expression, but in all other respects Latin is a dead language, although it has been enriching and will continue to enrich European languages with words of Latin origin along with ancient Greek.

\*The brief survey given above may help to throw some light on the linguistic problems of India. The history of Indian languages reflects the political history of India. In Hindu India, right down till the advent of the Moslems, Sanskrit continued to be the dominant language, even though the masses had developed their own vernaculars and were using them for their own daily needs. The Moslem conquest of India furnished one more example of the general sociological law that when one country is conquered by another, the language of the conqueror slowly permeates the conquered and even becomes the dominant language of the country. This was so when

Latin as the language of the Roman Empire influenced the languages of the different conquered states and carved out a unique dominant position for itself. So too, the Moslems brought with them to India all the wealth of the Persian language, which itself had been profoundly influenced by Arabic after the Arab conquest of Iran. The beauty and the music of the Persian language helped to popularize it among the Hindus, and the Hindu pandits were not slow in learning it and even writing in it. Hindi and Bengali have assimilated thousands of Persian words and so has Gujarati, because of the close commercial relations between Gujarat and Iran. Nevertheless a need was felt for a new language and it took its birth as Urdu. It literally means the language of the camp, as it was brought into being by the soldiers of the Mughal army.

Its basic structure was Hindi and the basic words were also Hindi, but there was a heavy influx of Persian and Arabic words, so that Urdu has come to have a distinct flavour of its own and has come to be a distinct language. But this distinctness is to be found more in writing than in speaking. As spoken languages, it is difficult to say where Hindi begins or Urdu ends, but writers have tended to make two languages of them by heavy doses of Sanskrit or of Persian and Arabic as the case may be. Thus though Hindi and Urdu have developed as distinct written languages with different scripts, it would be erroneous to identify them with Hindus or Moslems exclusively. Thanks to the dominance of the sociological law governing languages under the Moslem regime, Urdu developed to a remarkable extent, but it was not the creation of Moslems only. Countless Hindus have contributed to the richness of Urdu and it has become the mother tongue of Hindus as much as of Moslems. It is only in the last two decades that the Hindu-Moslem tension in politics has invaded the region of languages and fanatical Hindus have identified Urdu with Moslems

and there has been a persistent attempt on the part of some Hindu writers to eschew the use of words of Arabic or Persian origin. The utter undesirability of this has been seen in several South Indian writers who give a free reign to their Dravidian fanaticism and deliberately eschew words of Sanskrit origin. Both attempts are doomed to failure, for languages in their growth follow natural laws of usage and convenience and cannot be hindered in their growth by political prejudices. Maulana Azad as a master of Urdu did not conceal his growing anxiety over the widening rift between Hindi and Urdu and luckily he had the support of many eminent Hindus, including Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, in trying to stem the tide of this disruption. Urdu may be the official language of Pakistan as Hindi aspires to be the official language of India, but the purely Indian origin of Urdu cannot be denied and its place as one of the national languages has been recognized in the Indian Constitution. One can but hope that the political passions which marred the India of the pre-partition days will not be allowed to mar the even and peaceful evolution of Hindi and Urdu alike.

The sociological law of languages has been further illustrated by the advent of English in the cultural life of India. One might expect that the English from the very beginning would have foisted English on the conquered Indians. But, oddly enough, Warren Hastings and the English officials of that generation were not for introducing English in the educational system. They were content to extend their patronage to Sanskrit and Arabic and Persian in whatever limited way they could. It was the genius of Raja Ram Mohun Roy who spotted the potentialities of English as the medium to shake up the slumbering masses of India into activity. It was his forceful appeal in favour of English, though he himself was both a pandit and a munshi, that ultimately carried the day and Lord Macaulay put his stamp of approval on this

new revolutionary policy and launched it as foreboding the eventual political freedom of India. Perhaps Warren Hastings and his like instinctively felt the danger of opening the floodgates of Western science and Western culture, which would create a desire for freedom among Indians and make the continued dominance of the British in India an impossibility. Macaulay himself had no illusions on this point. He knew that the introduction of English would eventually lead to the break-up of the British Empire in India. But like a true Englishman with his love of freedom, he was not afraid of the future and in fact prophesied that the freedom of India would be the proudest day in the history of the British. Other Englishmen had the same feeling. Lord Elphinstone in Bombay and Thomas Monroe in Madras looked upon themselves as the trustees whose duty it was to place India on her own feet and free her of foreign dominance. It was again the genius of an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, that conceived the idea of founding the Indian National Congress, which within sixty years succeeded in emancipating India.

Various causes have contributed to the end of the British Empire in India but perhaps the one most conspicuous cause was the English language. As the medium of instruction in all the Universities in India, it led to the development of one common language to bind the intelligentsia of India. It became the language of political aspirations and made it possible for the Indian National Congress to sway the destiny of Indians. It may be known only by a fraction of the Indian population, but it is the fraction which counts in India and outside India. Through it India is able to play a part in international gatherings of every type.

In the new political set-up in India, the question naturally arises as to the place of the English language in the future of India. Among politicians there is a widespread desire to replace it by an Indian language. This

has been already achieved in our schools. But the Universities present a problem. The University authorities generally are not keen on giving up English, for no Indian language has books which can serve as text-books in the different subjects taught at the Universities. Hindi has been recognized as the official language of India, as being the one Indian language spoken most widely in India. But, apart from the heritage of Sanskrit words, the South Indians look upon Hindi as a foreign language and the masses of South India are ignorant of Hindi. In recent years, thanks to the work of the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, thousands of South Indians have been learning Hindi. Nevertheless traditional provincial jealousies tend to create a suspicion and fear that the dominance of Hindi will mean the dominance of the north over the south. This has given birth to a new slogan, 'English ever, Hindi never'. India today is faced with a terrible linguistic problem, the leading features of which may be briefly summarized as follows:

(1) English is so foreign that it can never hope to be learned by all Indians. It can only be the language of the classes and not of the masses.

(2) English has come to have such a hold on the educated that it is impossible to give it up without upsetting all educational values and standards.

(3) Even assuming that after some years English can be replaced, the question remains 'Replaced by what? By Hindi or the regional languages?'

If the political unity of India is to be maintained, there must be one common language and that can only be English or Hindi. Even if English can never hope to be the language of the masses, it can serve as the unifying language of the intelligentsia. Regional languages at the University stage will seriously affect the political and cultural unity of India and undo the great work of the

English language. The linguistic problem is further complicated by the fact that in no State do we have a complete homogeneity of linguistic groups. There is always a question of the minorities.

In view of this complexity, it would be wise to let the *status quo* continue for the time being. The sociological law is likely to work in favour of Hindi, if it is not sought to be imposed prematurely on the unwilling States. Time will also go far to build up at least one Indian language in a way that would meet the requirements of our Universities and the transition from English to it might follow its gradual course. The concept of the mother-tongue can be overdone. Millions of Negroes in America have come to look upon English as their mother-tongue, as have the different nationals from Europe who have found new homes in America. Language is a mighty instrument to forge new ideas and new loyalties required by the passage of time. Human welfare is of far greater importance than the dominance of this or that language. It is only from this broad humanitarian standpoint that linguistic problems can be solved. Political emotionalism and vested interests only cloud a simple issue and hamper its solution.

The contrast between the political and the educational approach to the linguistic problem in India is very well illustrated by the conflict of ideas as represented by Mahatma Gandhi and Maharshi Karve. Years ago when Dr. Karve, happily still with us a centenarian, was struggling with the idea of a women's university with an Indian language as the medium of instruction, Gandhiji visited Hingne, the cradle of Dr. Karve's activities. As an educationist, Dr. Karve was fully alive to the importance of English and included it as a compulsory subject even in his women's university. Gandhiji objected: 'I cannot co-operate with you if you make English compulsory'. Dr. Karve rose to the occasion and boldly replied: 'In that case we will have to work out the



scheme without your support '. This represents a very correct approach, for English has ceased to be merely the language of England. It has become a truly world language and so should not affect our political sentiments, especially in view of the historical fact that our patriotism has been cradled in the arms of the English language. To continue to know English has become a matter of necessity for us and not a luxury, which we can discard as we like. That is a lesson which impressed itself on the mind of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who certainly did not make a fetish of English, but knew the limits within which political sentiment can be allowed to have its way, and not an inch beyond.

*India and the West*

ON JUNE 23, 1757, a small army consisting of 1,022 European soldiers and artillerymen and 2,100 Indian sepoy trained on the European model, was deployed by their none-too-confident commander Clive on to the rain-sodden plain of Plassey. Against him was arranged the 50,000-strong force of Siraj-ud-Daula, the young, arrogant and impetuous, but pusillanimous, Nawab of Bengal. The sight of the proud bearing and glittering accoutrements of the enemy was not exactly calculated to spur the resolution of the hesitant British commander to fight. Nevertheless the two blundered into a skirmish.

The morning had been occupied by a desultory cannonade in which both sides took part. But as soon as the sun began to travel towards the western horizon, the Nawab's troops started falling back to their camp. Clive was enjoying his afternoon siesta, according to the contemporary historian, Orme. His second in command, taking courage in both hands, gave the order to advance on his own responsibility. The Indian side had no stomach for a real fight, for in the words of Clive 'tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what' had settled the issue before the battle was joined. The treachery of the officers and the death of the only loyal captain convinced the Nawab that discretion was the better part of valour. He incontinently fled to his capital, and there met with his doom.

This sorry episode, none too creditable either for the victors or the vanquished, described as 'the greatest anti-climax in all history', opened a new chapter in the

long and vicissitudinous history of relations between the East and the West. Plassey marked the rise of the sun of a new civilization which arose above the horizon of the Atlantic and whose refulgence paled the stars of Asia into insignificance.

For an Asian, the shattering event is a challenge. India's dismal failure and England's resounding triumph call for explanation. For Plassey was not a mere military defeat, it was the debacle of a whole civilization. The victory was not due to military superiority alone, although it is true that the British six-pounders were better served than the huge calibered twenty-four to thirty-pounder guns of Siraj-ud-Daula. Was it due to lack of courage? Indian troops have proved on a thousand battlefields since Plassey that they are inferior to none so far as the possession of this quality is concerned.

The British troops were better trained and disciplined, but tactics could be learned, as the Marathas and the Sikhs demonstrated in later wars. Yet possession of modern weapons and the use of modern methods of warfare proved unavailing to them, and within a hundred years of Plassey the whole of India had passed under British dominion.

The fact is that Clive and his thousand European soldiers represented a new way of life which the West had forged in the centuries preceding their advent to India. At the middle of the 18th century, Europe, and especially its most advanced member, Britain, was the bearer of a dynamic, expansive culture. During the last five hundred years it had passed through several revolutions which had broken the bonds of feudalism, and emancipated individual and society. First had come the economic revolution of the English boroughs and the continental communes, which promoted trade and industry, supported the accumulation of capital and brought into being the middle class, the principal agency of all subsequent economic, social and political change.

In the homes of this class, in the cities of Italy first and then of the other European lands, there came a marvellous awakening of the spirit — a liberation of the mind from shackles of authority, an opening of the eye to the unknown realms of nature and an insight into the inner recesses of the soul. Man had found himself. Self-authorized, self-dependent, self-assured, free, he faced the world which he went out to conquer. He crossed the oceans and bestrode the continents. Poor, the untold riches of the world were spread out before him; short of food, an unlimited vista of fertile lands invited him to settle and exploit. If densely-populated, old Europe offered 24 acres for the support of each individual, the empty spaces of the new Europe across the Atlantic placed at his disposal an area four to five times as large. It has been calculated that before the great discoveries of the 16th century, the population of Europe was about one hundred million souls, and the land at their disposal three million, seven hundred and fifty square miles. The quantity of gold and silver available was about two hundred million dollars. At the time the battle of Plassey was fought, the population had registered an increase of over 50 per cent, the area of land had multiplied by six, but the stock of precious metals had risen by 2,000 per cent. How much had been added to the wealth of commodities, there is no means of ascertaining.

The breezes that wafted Europe's ships to and from the Atlantic created a boom in its economy. They also filled the nostrils with the breath of the frontier spirit — self-reliance, resourcefulness, ruthlessness, contempt for tradition and authority.

On the heels of the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery came the Reformation. The universalism which the Roman Catholic Church had sought to impose upon the Christian peoples of Europe carried with it implications galling to the new life which was emerging. Both interest and principle, politics and faith, dictated a

repudiation of Papal authority, an affirmation of freedom from foreign control of religious establishments. Incidentally, the movement stimulated the growth of capitalism and individualism.

Then followed the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England. It was an important link in the chain of events which transformed the political system of England. It made Parliament the centre round which the life of the people revolved. More, Hobbes' prophetic vision was justified, Austin's definition foreshadowed. The Leviathan, the omni-competent power, the sovereign State, had come into being. The bearer of its person was Parliament, its sustainer the middle class. The merchant turned landlord, the landlord became a shareholder in the monopolist joint stock company of merchant adventurers. From the seeds of civilization sown during the Puritan Revolution a mighty tree had grown — its fruits were liberty, fortune, due process of law, above all, national consciousness. The age of nationalism had been ushered in. In 1740, the first national hymn, 'Rule, Britannia, Britannia rule the waves', had been composed. National opinion was voiced through ten million copies of newspapers. Bolingbroke expatiated upon the spirit of patriotism. Milton in his stately prose celebrated the birth of the new Israel, the new England, 'a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies'.

Another revolution with even more far-reaching consequences was trickling through. Jethro Tull, 'Turnip' Townsend, Robert Bakewell were the pioneers of a movement which was soon to merge itself in the mighty flood of the Industrial Revolution.

The prophets of this age in which man and nature had assumed a new significance were Locke, Newton, Hume and Adam Smith. They provided the justification for the social and political changes of the times and laid the theoretic foundations of English culture. They determined the framework for thought and discovered the laws,

processes and methods of its activity. In their philosophy, man and nature stand face to face as two independent principles. Experience correlates man, the private independent conscious substance, with nature, an objective and public order of material atoms. Experience is individual and creates the private world of knowledge, and in this all individuals are alike. Hence follow equality and liberty, absence of constraint in religion and minimization of constraint in society, politics and economics. Man is a free being who creates his social and political structures, gives laws to himself and measures out the things that are in heaven and on earth.

Nature is a unified order functioning in objective time and space. It writes on the clean slate of man's consciousness; then reads the signs and combines them and the book of forms, sounds and odours is compiled, and while Nature is one, the books are as many as men.

The revolution-tossed civilization of the West is like the Heraclitean river in which one cannot step twice. Change is its essential character. Its intellectual basis is that restless knowledge whose prior and posterior are always in flux. Einstein averred, 'Our notions of physical reality can never be final'. Its interest in things which are not seen but are eternal is overlaid by its preoccupation with things which throng and press upon the senses. A modern American thinker points out. 'We believe our Western scientific, philosophical, and religious theories to be true not because we directly introspect or sense what they assert, but because, assuming them by hypothesis to be true, it follows by logical deduction or mathematical calculation that the empirical facts which are directly sensed or introspected should be what "they are".'

In the tropical mango grove of Plassey, as Clive nervously surveyed the field on that wet summer day, did he perhaps subconsciously realize that he was the instrument of irresistible destiny? Opposite to him stood serried ranks which presented a glittering facade. What

lay behind it? A civilization over three thousand years old, which had suffered from the inconstancy of fortune. Noontides of glory had alternated with long dusks of internal strife and dark nights of humiliation. Invaders had come, conquered, built empires, established peace, given opportunity to wealth to accumulate, arts to flourish and culture to refine. Aliens had entered with strange religions and unknown ways. Most of them became absorbed in the spongy softness of Hindu society. Islam retained its religious individuality, although cultural exchange profoundly modified it; so much so that Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire, was struck by the wide differences between the peoples of India, including his co-religionists, and the peoples of other lands. He was constrained to denote it 'the Hindustani way'.

Babar's Empire waxed, its reputation spread far and wide, Milton sang of 'the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind'. European travellers who visited the country found that Delhi and Agra surpassed London and Paris. Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan raised India to the pinnacle of fame. Then the wheel turned. The edifice of the great Empire was shaken. In the 18th century it lay in ruins. The central authority which sustained order and unity had lost its virtue, and India was turned into a human cauldron of seething and warring elements, a perfect exemplar of the Hobbesian state of nature.

Destruction of political loyalty gave free rein to unprincipled self-seeking. Destruction of political unity impoverished the State and spread economic chaos. Each one for himself and the devil take the hindmost, became the general maxim of conduct. But such a political crash was not altogether unprecedented. A number of times before similar anarchic situations had occurred. They were followed by reconstruction either by some power within the country or by a conqueror from abroad. But the new structure which arose on the ruins of the old did not alter the ground plan. Social system and culture

continued from age to age without any revolutionary or basic change. The British conquest of India did not conform to this pattern. The encounter between two fundamentally different civilizations was a novel experience and it had fateful consequences.

It is difficult to describe this pre-British India. The political terminology at our disposal creates misunderstanding. State and society as they existed in India in the middle of the 18th century did not carry the attributes which belong to the meaning of these terms. State is a political organism with a three-fold function — legislative, judicial and executive. The Indian State did not legislate and hardly dispensed justice. Law was divinely ordained and was unalterable by human will. The sacred books — the *Dharma Sastras* of the Hindus and the *Shari'at* of the Musalmans — contained eternal injunctions for all social and political needs and contingencies. The learned in the law knew the provisions of law and could extend them in accordance with accepted principles of interpretation to every situation. No temporal organization dare tamper with these laws. No Parliament or legislative body was necessary. Law-making was beyond the purview of the State.

Justice, in causes that were personal, was an application of sacred laws and was the function of the learned pandits and sastris or maulavis and qazis. They were self-appointed independent juris-consults, whose decisions were accepted as binding by the people. Governments may or may not recognize the judges, may remunerate them by grants of land or leave them severely alone. Much of crime was under the jurisdiction of these masters of theological lore, but for a great deal the village community was responsible. Offences against the State or its agents were dealt with according to the arbitrary choice of the person in authority. Thus, outside the limits of canonical justice, not law but personal fiat ruled; within its bounds no earthly authority could intervene.



Hinduism and Islam left to the King the executive function mainly. Its two principal aspects were revenue and army — *Kosa, Balam; Diwan, Fauj*. In the matter of revenue, too, there was a severe limitation. Taxation in the modern sense was unknown. Land revenue was the chief source of income and its rates were laid down in the holy books. True enough, impecunious, improvident and extravagant princes did not always stick to the letter of the law, but the breaches were always a strain upon conscience.

In return for what he realized from his subjects, the ruler rendered two indispensable services. Both exceeded the power of the village. One was the execution of public works, in which the more important and more useful was the provision of irrigation works, for on them depended to a considerable extent the revenue of the State. Dependence on rainfall was always hazardous. Wells, reservoirs and canals needed funds, technical skill and organization which only a resourceful Government had at its command.

Again maintenance of peace and order, security of life and property, defence against greedy invaders, were functions of a strong, competently-led and well-supplied army. Preparedness for war entailed continuous campaigning, for war itself was the proper training for war. Thus war was idealized.

The model Hindu king was one who conquered lands and brought all rulers under the umbrella of his suzerainty. It was the religious obligation of a Moslem king that he should propagate his faith calling upon non-Moslems to accept Islam or to come under its protection. The entire hierarchy of State services, civil and military, under the Mughal Empire, consisted of men holding command in the army, from a corporal with ten horsemen under him to the general who led ten thousand.

The enlightened among the Emperors undertook great works of public utility — roads, bridges, canals,

reservoirs, mansions, houses of worship. They were patrons of arts like music, painting and architecture. They promoted literature and science, endowed schools and offered generous rewards to poets, historians and other writers. Their courts were centres of fine crafts which made India famous all over the world.

This semi-socialistic, paternalistic, rigidly circumscribed, non-autonomous State, to which the Austinian definition of sovereignty does not apply, existed in India for millenia, because it was well adapted to the system of society to which it belonged.

The village was the unit of this society. It was a self-sufficient, isolated unit. It might stand alone or it might be linked with other units. The grouping might be due to the settlement of a clan or tribe over a large territory, or the result of division of family, or again of some social or political compulsion.

The village was an economic unit, subsisting on what it produced. Its inhabitants were free peasants, unlike the serfs of feudal Europe, who gave a share of their produce to the State. This was one-sixth in ancient times, rose to one-third in Akbar's days and to one-half and a little more in the 18th century. The share was collected by an intermediary, either a government official acting directly for the State, or an assignee who was allotted an estate so that he might discharge the services of his rank, or a grantee, or a farmer of revenue, or an old family of landlords, a Raja or a chief. The assignees were in a large majority. They and the grantees and farmers were temporary holders of their assignments, for they were frequently transferred. Hereditary Rajas and chiefs were few. The result was that India did not develop a hereditary aristocracy. The bigger intermediaries did not come into contact with the village, for the collections were made through village headmen and stewards. Village needs were satisfied through its own craftsmen, who received remuneration for their services in *kirā* at the time of the

harvest. Village servants, like the watchman and sweeper, were similarly paid. In this natural economy money played an insignificant role.

The village was a social unit, for the elaborate caste system was maintained *en rigueur*. The higher and the lower castes had their separate quarters and the 'untouchables' lived on the margin.

The village was an administrative unit too. It had its own fund to administer, its own police, its own judicial agency and its own defence. The village elders, irrespective of caste in the north, and exclusively Brahmin in the south, constituted a somewhat informal council responsible for the village activities relating to administration, general welfare, charity, education, amusements, etc. To the life of the State the contribution of the village was the supply of the traditional share in kind or cash as convenience dictated. Sometimes the immediate lord of the village was recalcitrant and then the king's men and horses would descend upon the rebellious chief and enforce obedience. At other times, the intermediary would harass the cultivator with harsh and excessive demands. When the tyranny could no longer be borne, the cultivator had recourse to the ancient Roman device of secession. In times when men were in short supply and land abundant, the landlord had the worst of it. He had to eat humble pie and coax the tenant to return.

Wrapped up within itself, the village had little concern with what happened in the wider world. Dynasties rose and fell, empires grew and decayed, but it let the conquering legions thunder past and plunged in thought again. It lived in the eternal present, for it there was no past and no future. Time stood still. History had no meaning. This timelessness became instilled into the Indian mind and expressed itself in all its deliverances — religion, philosophy, literature and art.

The core of the Indian religions is mystic experience, direct, non-mediated, ineffable. Its epistemology defines

the goal of knowledge to be that state of enlightenment for which the categories of Time and Space are irrelevant. Its metaphysics seeks to determine the relations between the relative and the absolute, the finite and the infinite, and to establish the identity of the human and the divine. Its ethics lays down the course of discipline by which the individual realizes freedom. Indian literature is not the impressionistic portrayal of fleeting emotions and sentiments, but an endeavour to capture and express the necessary stages in the eternal flow of the emotional stream. Indian art envisions, by acts of immediate apprehension and direct intuition, the aesthetic substance that lies hidden behind the veil of objective multiplicity. Line, colour and plastic form are its means. With their aid the artist creates symbols of the indeterminate reality which the mediating categories of perception and intellection differentiate into physical objects. This reality is that transcendent beauty of which the passing show of this world is a shadow. Painting depicts not merely the sense data which our eyes gather, but points to the reality which lies beyond. The great statues of the Buddha are oblivious of the physical man. The sculptor is interested only in giving visible form to supernal compassion and divine serenity. The object of religious architecture is to erect an edifice which will provide a worthy dwelling for God. Music and dance are means whereby the empirical self is transcended and individual consciousness merged in the universal harmony.

Plassey threw out a challenge to this India and her defences did not hold. The tide of Western culture crossed the bar and came flooding into the land. Much of the accumulated stinking debris of ages was swept away and with it a considerable lot that was sound and healthy also. But historical catastrophies like their natural counterparts do not stop to choose and discriminate.

Immediately a chain reaction started. It gathered amazing speed. Europe had traversed the interval from

the medieval to the modern in 500 years. Half a dozen revolutions had marked the stages of its progress: three economic revolutions — commercial, agrarian and industrial; a cultural revolution — the Reformation; and a political revolution — the English, which established Parliamentary rule, and the French, which swept away the ancient regime. They culminated in establishing the modern national sovereign States.

India made a similar journey from medievalism to modernism, and the route passed through similar stages, but instead of five it took India one century and a half to travel the distance. It was as a result of economic, social and political revolutions that India which was a loose conglomeration of atomic, semi-independent village republics became a united sovereign nation, the second largest State of the modern world.

In the process of East going West, there have been varying degrees of willing acceptance, deliberate rejection and all the shades of submission, conscious and unconscious co-operation, imitation and assimilation. The West has transmitted itself sometimes in the form of force and prestige, sometimes as example and persuasion, and sometimes as sheer necessity. The process has been in operation since Plassey. It has profoundly changed India, but it has created dualism in the Indian mind which remains unresolved so far. What the final outcome will be, no one can tell. Will Indian civilization end up as some sort of a province of the universal empire of Western culture? Will it ultimately repudiate the West, and chalk out its own lone path to follow? Or will India succeed in finding a middle way wherein the fundamental attitudes and concepts of the East and the West are fused?

The process started on the economic plane. It struck down the isolation and self-sufficiency of the village. In place of the agrarian system of which the free peasant cultivator, the real producer of wealth, was the permanent limb, the intermediary a casual participant in his produce

for the service of collecting rents for the State, and the State itself a more or less sleeping partner, an entirely new scheme was introduced. A hereditary class of landholders was created, the cultivator was reduced to the position of a tenant-at-will. The landholder became owner and acquired the rights of property — gift, mortgage, sale at his free choice. Land became a marketable commodity.

The tendency was reinforced by the injection of money into the agrarian system. Rent and revenue were no longer linked to the amount of produce from crop to crop, but were realized in cash. They were not dependent upon the quantum of produce, but were fixed for long periods of time. Failure to pay was punishable with ejection from and sale of land. Money encouraged functionless absentee landlordism. But this class became more like the French *rentier* than the English squire, only unlike the French, their income was not derived from stocks and securities, but from land. They congregated in towns, built Western-looking homes with Western furniture, imitated the manners of the Western ruling class, sent their children to English schools or to England, and were regarded as the pillars of the Empire. They showed the attributes of a middle class — a class between the foreign ruling oligarchy and the Indian masses, a class interested in money and the advantages which its possession confers — influence in society and in government, largely exercised to promote class interests.

Payment of rents in money forced the produce into the market, created a class of grain merchants and a class of moneylenders. This encouraged the transfer of land from the genuine agriculturist to the urban land speculator. Money gave an impetus to the increase of money crops. No longer was immediate consumption the objective of production. Specialization of crops grew and an ever-widening market swept the village products into its cavernous bosom to satisfy its insatiable appetite.

Two other factors had their impact upon the village — the introduction of the Western means of transport and communication, and the growth of population. The British built new roads and bridges and improved the old ones, and in 1854 laid the first railway lines. Telegraphs followed. Together they gave an immense impetus to the mobility of man and of goods. Peace and order and the elimination of some of the Malthusian factors inhibitive of growth pushed up population in geometrical progression, from less than 150 millions in the 18th century to over 200 millions in 1872, with the result that land came under short supply and man became overabundant. While in the Deccan in 1771 the average holding of a peasant had an area of 40 acres, in 1818 it was reduced to 17½ acres, and in 1915 to seven acres (Harold Mann, *The Deccan Village*).

In the absence of alternative avenues of employment, pressure upon land enormously increased, the urge for movement was accentuated, and the old isolation broke down. Conditions promoting the economic unification of the vast sub-continent were established. The creation of a highly-centralized system of government in which minute details of administration were controlled from the capital and all areas were brought under the rigid frame of uniform impersonal laws, gave powerful support to this tendency.

In the sphere of trade and industry, the change was equally radical. Village industry was shattered, because it could not withstand the double shock of measures of protection adopted by the English Government for its own home products and the competition of the fast-developing factory system of England. The handloom was no match for the power-loom, and the poor village weaver had no shield against the selfishness of a commercially-minded imperialist power. England needed raw materials for her growing industry and a market for the disposal of manufactured goods. India's extensive

arable lands and rapidly-increasing population fulfilled both needs. So, India's economy was geared to that of Britain. A vast field for the investment of British capital was opened. A commercial revolution weighed anchor. Eventually it landed India into the world market, with its mechanism of price adjustment and its economic consequences.

The landed middle class was swelled by the addition of a mercantile section, which soon became dissatisfied with its somewhat secondary and subordinate role and began to clamour for opportunities to utilize its capital to share the profits of large-scale industry. But these opportunities were slow to materialize and the Indian industrial revolution awaited the dawn of a better day.

The destruction of village industry compelled the artisan either to join the army of landless labourers in the rural areas or to migrate to towns. Either alternative provided grist to the mill of common discontent.

The agrarian and commercial revolutions demolished the walls which divided Indians into atomized groups. New techniques, appliances and methods were processes which began to join these groups to form an organic whole. As the body was being built up, the spirit of a new social order was making ready to enter.

Indian religion is a strange mixture of order and liberty. Apparently for the Hindu, it was necessary to place the outer man in the straitjacket of permission and prohibitions subject to the militaristic drill of caste, in order to enable the inner spirit to flutter its wings and soar into the empyrean of freedom. Complete liberation was rooted in complete bondage. Howsoever that might be, the highest goal of human striving is spiritual freedom. One who attains this freedom is released from the bondage of earthly attachments, from subjection to the two sovereign masters of the human mind : pleasure and pain. Freedom is a state of enlightenment which is reached when the spirit of man tears asunder the veils which cover and



obscure the light within. These sheaths are constituted of the material, biological, physiological, mental and intellectual environment which envelops the soul. They prevent the self from knowing itself. Discard them and behold the knowledge of self is there and everlasting happiness. Hinduism does not deny this knowledge to anyone, whatever his caste, creed, colour, sex or position. This knowledge is not acquired through reading of books, even the sacred books, nor can discursive reason, logic and science lead to it. The reading of scriptures may be prohibited to certain castes by the social system, but the knowledge which brings freedom is forbidden to none.

But for the seeker who wishes to reach this goal there is a two-fold discipline, physiological and psychological, *yama* and *niyama*, control of body and of mind. The latter is based upon the practice of non-violence, truth, non-covetousness, sex-control and restraint of senses. One who travels along this path unmindful of difficulties and with utter devotion enters at the end of his pilgrimage into the blessed land where the sun of truth, beauty and happiness shines eternally.

It is inexplicable how this exquisite insight with its exalted values became tacked on to a religion of elaborate rites and ceremonies and of a hierarchical order of society, an order which fixed the status and function of the individual on the basis of heredity, and therefore on the denial of freedom, equality and justice.

The assault of Western science and Christianity shook the foundation of this Janus-faced structure. So far as the first aspect was concerned, it was treated by some in the West with a light-hearted facetiousness in the beginning. But Western psychologists, philosophers and historians changed that. William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, the occupation of psychology with the different layers of the human mind from the subconscious to the supra-conscious, the philosophy of Henri Bergson, and the study of medieval culture and of the mystics, turned

indifference and contempt into respect. Even a realist like Bertrand Russell attempted to rationalize mysticism.

The second aspect, however, proved vulnerable. On the plane of thought, India has rejected caste. The Indian Constitution does not recognize caste and positively condemns untouchability. Religious movements started under Western influence have repudiated caste, polytheistic worship and ritual, and a great deal of mythology. They have made a critical examination of doctrine and dogma. Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Rama Krishna Paramhansa were some of the pioneers of these movements in the 19th century.

The impact of Western thought brought about results analogous to those in European countries. It disturbed the placidity of traditionalism and bestirred rational and critical thinking. Again the movement was not confined to any one region, east, west, north and south; all were affected.

All communities — Hindus, Musalmans and others — responded to the stimulus. Unfortunately, although the new attitude of mind was shared by all, its application to different religions widened the gulf between them. The Hindu reformer was dissatisfied with the existing religion, but he was not prepared to change his faith at the invitation of the Christian missionary or the zealous British official. He searched for a purer form of his own religion and found in the ancient past of his country, in the Upanishads and the Bhagvad Gita, what he wanted. So he set to revive their teachings to model Hindu life in the new era in accordance with the old precepts.

Similarly, the Musalmans condemned the innovations which had crept into the faith since the times of the Prophet to corrupt its pristine purity. They too wanted to recapture the ideals of a simple and dedicated life which had moved their co-religionists in the years of the righteous Caliphs. So they looked to Arabia as their spiritual and cultural home.

In spite of similarity of aims, of methods and of approach, the end-product of the two movements was different. The Hindu, in travelling towards the original sources of faith, attempted to recover its essential features, its intuitive insight, its view of the universe as the projection of the supreme consciousness, its identification of the individual self with the ultimate reality, its tendency to depreciate the value of the determinate.

On the other hand, the Moslem laid stress on other characteristics: the determinate personality of a transcendent God, the historic mission of a final revelation made to a chosen people, their duty to rescue men from divine wrath and from eternal perdition.

While the Hindu mind was primarily concerned with what is true, the Moslem was exercised over what is right. The Hindu emphasized the private and personal aspect of religious experience, the Moslem its incorporation in the collective body of the faithful. The Hindu was inclined to gloss over the shortcomings of his social customs, the Moslem was annoyed with them. On the other hand, the intolerance of the Moslem and the memory of the past distressed the Hindu. The Hindu felt no kinship with the Arab past which the Moslem hugged to his bosom. The Moslem did not feel at home in Vedic India. While the consciousness of group developed, and the element of territoriality was prominent in both, the content of the two did not quite coincide and fuse. Such an achievement required complete depoliticization of religion, for which the time was not ripe. Nonetheless, the sea had been agitated to its very depths.

Religious reform and Western inspiration set in motion forces which changed habits, customs, manners and institutions, e.g., the status of woman, and the concept of marriage.

As a result of the meeting of the East and the West, something like the European Renaissance blossomed forth in India. It had two sides — a revival of ancient

learning, and a reception of modern Western knowledge. The first supplied the necessary support to Indian self-esteem, and the second a number of things — a common medium of communication for this multi-lingual country, a literature of power which gave form to the new sentiment of nationalism, a new language for the strange emotions which were setting Indian hearts on fire, a new intellectual attitude — empirical, scientific and critical. A new interest grew up in temporal surroundings. Literature, art, music, theatre began to reflect this interest. Besides the imperative of 'Know thyself', another command sounded, 'Know thy neighbour'. A romantic haze enveloped the past. It compensated for the triviality and wretchedness of the present, and presented an inverted projection of the future.

The system of education introduced by the British deliberately neglected this past, in fact sought to denigrate it. Equally deliberately, it insisted upon the study of Western knowledge. The literary movement fostered by the Westernized schools and Universities gave birth to the Indian intelligentsia. Services and professions were manned by them. They swelled the ranks of the middle class, contributed to the national awakening, and led the movement for Independence.

All these revolutions were more or less simultaneous, for all were consequent upon the establishment of British rule in India. Common to them the most stimulating factor was political. For the first time India had the experience of a State which had all the attributes of sovereignty, a State which abolished intermediaries and came into direct relations with the subjects, a State which demanded and obtained the obedience of its subjects irrespective of distance from the centre, a State which placed temporal authority above spiritual. Thus a most powerful impulse was given to centripetal forces; and administrative unity long exercised generated a collectivity.

British rule did more. It established the regime of law. Although political philosophers have debated since Plato's time between the merits of a State governed by wisdom as represented in a person, a philosopher-king, and as embodied in law, personal government disappeared from India in the wake of Siraj-ud-Daula's defeat. The idea of the supremacy of law was accompanied with the idea of human — as distinguished from supernatural — origin of law, and the autonomic character of society was emphasized.

This naturally raised the question of the propriety of obeying laws made by an alien human superior. So revolutionary a question could only be appropriately posed by a public person and not by private individuals in severalty or conjointly. Out of the marriage of the East and the West this public person had been born; the revolutions—economic, social, religious and cultural—were just the natural pang preceding birth.

The question which like a cloud looked no bigger than a hand at the start, soon in its terrifying gravity and disturbing significance assumed enormous proportions and extended its shadow over the entire political landscape. Then in the end it rolled away as mutual goodwill and understanding decided the issue to the satisfaction of the twinned nationalisms of India and Pakistan.

\*The chapter in the story of relations between the West and India which had commenced with Plassey was consummated on 15 August, 1947, when at the stroke of the midnight hour, Lord Mountbatten, the last of the British Viceroys of India, handed over the instrument of government to the representatives of the Indian people.

The prophesy of Kipling has proved false. East and West have met, and the meeting has been fruitful. Over three hundred and sixty million people have solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign democratic republic, to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty,

equality and fraternity. They have started upon a fresh , career. Their aspirations are high, their determination firm. They have in their history travelled a long distance and their way has been winding and strewn with obstructions, but they have borne along with them a unique civilization, unique in its apprehension of beauty, unique in its search for knowledge, unique in its vision of the destiny of man. May be the world needs the insights of this civilization.





